

Hannus.

Rachel Lebowitz

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of

English

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ABSTRACT

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This work centres around the life of my great-grandmother, Ida Hannus, a suffragist who left Finland in 1902 for Sointula, a Finnish utopian commune on Malcolm Island, British Columbia. After the commune dissolved, she and her husband moved to Vancouver, where she ultimately brought up her four children alone (three others having died in infancy). She worked a variety of jobs – housekeeper, maid in a skid row hotel, seamstress, landlady – and was active in the Finnish socialist hall in Vancouver. She died in 1953, when she was struck by a car.

Her story is divided into three main sections. The first concentrates on the events and her experiences in the commune, the second examines her life as a wife and mother during the years 1905 – 1927, and the third focuses on her political involvement during the 30s and 40s. The work uses a number of different styles – interviews, quotes, lyric poems, dramatic monologues, official records, photographs – and is told in three main perspectives – Ida's, mine (as descendant and researcher) and my mother's. These many perspectives and sources redefine and complicate the narrative, and ultimately raise questions about the reliability of history and biography.

For my mother

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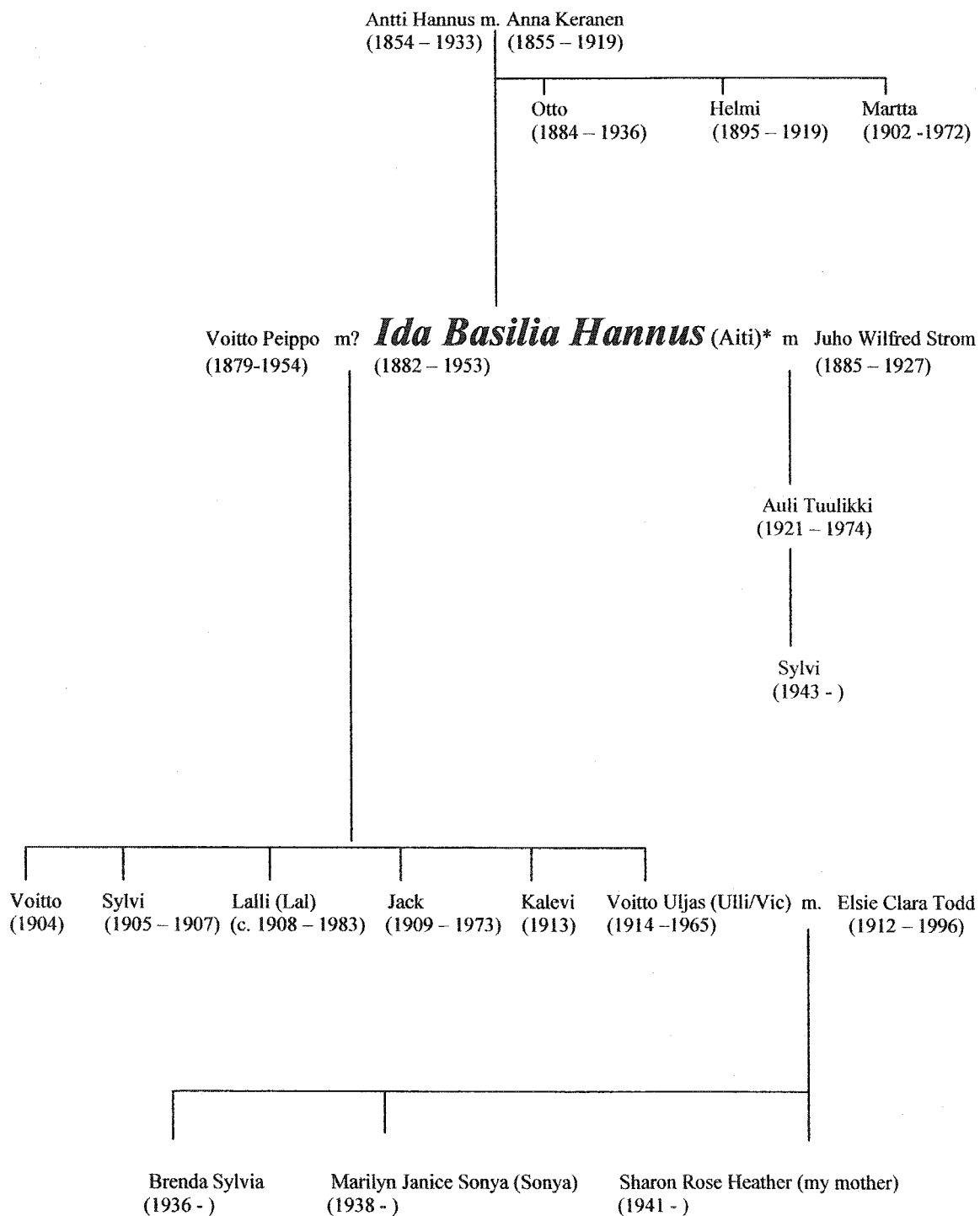
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SELECTIVE FAMILY TREE



* Ida's grandchildren called her "Aiti" (Finnish for *mother*)

i don't know if you exist, but i want to think as
if you were looking into my soul and i want to act
as if you were facing me-

1901 - 1905

Some lost their eyes,

or never had any to begin with. The man at the back could be holding a bundle of linen, not a baby – the saddest one, the one born overexposed, the one they let into the photograph, into posterity. There are three heads belonging to children, but this the only body. How it disappoints with its swaddled limbs, its lack of form. The musician near the front melts.

They must have taken time off their work for this.

On Saturday nights the Finnish colonists relaxed with plays, concerts, and debates at the Finnish Organization Hall.

But they are not relaxed. The Hall is cold. And some of them lost their bodies – excuse me, I mean never had any to begin with. These colonists never got up off the chairs; the ones standing felt the cedar planks cut ridges into their backs. If you cut away the paper clothes, you'll see red welts, the only colour in the room.

Somehow they must have spoken, must have gone on with the business of living. How can we believe this? How can we believe they walked away when here's proof they remained in this room forever?

Let me show you my great-grandfather; look, see this one over here, that's my great-grandmother, Ida. It starts to snow. The floorboards are icy, and the lamp hangs motionless. Outside, a child falls and starts to cry. Perhaps they hear him, though he's muted by the snow. It is soggy, dispirited: wet paper towels fallen from bathroom ceilings. Outside the picture, it's getting dark. Inside, the colonists nurse their grievances in silence, hold bundles of linen or children's heads and stare.

Utterly Strange Doors

All the trees here bite
all the fir sprigs beat
every birch tree knocks
every alder cuts:
only the wind do I know
and the sun have seen before
in these foreign lands
utterly strange doors.

Come here, you proper sons and daughters of Finn mothers who comprehend that freedom is at the start and finish of man's purpose...Come here to live with us in freedom, where all are equal in the harmony of shared thoughts, and all find satisfaction and pleasure in the protection of the weak.*

* Matti Kurikka, August 23rd, 1901



Figure 1. Finnish emigrants. (www.genealogia.fi/emi/emi0024e.htm)

There's water – and wind, smacking salt onto her face;
ragged clouds like birds with their wings torn off,
and the deck, smudged with dirt.

There's foreign words, swallowed by this god-forsaken sea that
rises and falls into stark grey –
where fingers rough with work catch rain –
watch it slide down her cheek, slit her skin like glass.

(she clenched the rail heaving

and the gulls

circled)

Let's avoid romanticism, sentimentality – all those emigrants staring out at the horizon, longing for home, that speck of land growing smaller, and the tears standing in their eyes. The fact is, they were puking their guts out over the side, though the daintier ones used cracked buckets kept expressly for that purpose. The girl with the dirty blue hair ribbon had pink eyes, clotted lashes. The man who had the shits ignored the curses, the bangs on the door.

The six-year-old boy sneezed into his hands, then wiped them onto another child's head. Lots with colds. Armpits prickly with sweat. Hands crawling with lice.

If they thought of home at all, it wasn't in curlicue borders, with little daisies and violets. It was a thought that came to them between bouts of vomiting, a yearning for a clean bed, a sauna.

Those emigrants who stared out at the horizon did so to steady themselves, to hold back the taste of bile.

Your riches are corrupted, and your garments moth eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire

- James 5:2,3.

Manifest page 0208. Contract ticket no. 34695. No. on list: 8

In the line (three abreast) that stretched from the dock into the Baggage Room up the steep flight of stairs to the hall of the Registry Room,

those were the numbers pinned on her dress.

Blue chalk for the sick or contagious.

Pg for pregnant. K, hernia.

X for those with feeble minds.

No, she was never in Prison or Almshouse or supported by charity.

No, she was not a Polygamist.

Deformed or Crippled, Nature and Cause: No.

The woman beside her tried to stop coughing.

The buttonhook men walked down the line.

It is not true that Ida knew no one when she came to the New World. She could not have left Ellis Island if that were true. She would have had to stay in the dormitory. She would have had to sleep in a triple-tiered bunk.

In 1907, the room was filled with thousands. They sweated, coughed, screamed, flung their bodies against the floor. They were moved to the expanded hospital building and psychopathic ward. Some went to the morgue. Others received telegrams and left. But Ida would have stayed.

In 1910, they would have moved her to the new Baggage and Dormitory Room. She would have been so thin then, a bundle of dry bones.

It would not be true that she died crossing Hastings Street. Single women were not allowed to cross the street.

THE SUFFRAGIST MARCH

Ida gets off the trains. Walks. Walks from the trains. In the rain. It is raining. It is raining when she gets off the trains. She doesn't have an umbrella, and her dark hair is wet. All the people talking loud and it is raining and she gets off the trains. Where is the second train? Maybe Montreal. She takes the train to Vancouver then walks: walks to the train and then walks a bit on the train and then gets off the train and walks some more. We know that she got off the trains. She gets off and all the words. And the words that are on the signs. And it is raining. The words on the signs bleed together and the rain that keeps on pouring down and the sticks dark with wet. She carries one of the signs but doesn't know the words all the words, the words. It is 2 p.m. Saturday. 1902.

Place of Harmony

We have passed the steepest precipice. The Finns from Nanaimo and Extension have performed a deed which will be mentioned in the history of humanity. We now have an island rich in natural beauty, blessed with a good climate, and near prosperous shipping routes. There we will create our own country...bringing all Finns to live within its shelter.

We will be self-sufficient and produce everything we need. Unemployment and sickness will evaporate into the past and strikes and poverty will become unknown. It only depends on us to break free from the feet of the capitalists and to become equals. Only then will the characteristics of our nationality have an opportunity to blossom and prosper!*

* Matti Kurikka, c. December, 1901

HOMECOMING

Captain Barney Johnson had been the captain of the coastal steamship that brought that first group of settlers to Sointula. It was just a routine trip for him, but he did remember "a crazy young guy with a trumpet" who sat up in the bow of the ship all day, blowing salutes to every ship they passed...V. Peippo, no doubt.

This is not what it says in the books. The captain for that first trip was Johan Mikkelsen, and Voitto was not one of the original settlers. I wanted more, but no one knew. Hundreds lined up for pulla, squares, coffee, tea. My great-grandfather beside them, thumbtacked to the wall.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN OF SOINTULA, CIRCA 1902.

Bony faces, boys with bare legs.
And women, scrubbed pale and hard,
stood on a floor
in the woods, babies
in their arms.

*

*The autumn rains had already begun
when we arrived.*

*Where to shelter our group;
where to put the thirteen head of cattle
when there was no cover for even the people?*

*

Many wore white. Ida wore a black shirt,
a ribbon around her neck.

They stood there waiting.
It was early fall, before the rain.

The boys kicked leaves:
sharp smell of dirt.
The women stared the camera head on:
drained, worn out faces.

Ida stood sideways.
Her body clean.
That morning, she wrung her skirt
and lay it to dry in the sun.

This before the rains,
when all she knew was that she was here, at last,
amongst the breaking trees.



Figure 2. Sointula, circa 1904. (Dreams of Freedom)

Walked on the beach this morning.
No noise but my feet on the rocks.
I watched the otters
poking their heads up to look at me.
I watched them looking.

Birds sing. Crow caws.
Black pebbles dull in the air.
Pink starfish in pools.

Once, he came, watched me
twirl a leaf in my hands;

the wind rising,
and the sound of his horn

in the early light.

Voitto made music
with small hands, slender fingers
his thumb rose, lightly touching:
the young wept and the old wept
and the married fellows wept
and the unmarried men wept
even Voitto
had water roll from his eyes
rounder than a grouse's eggs
larger than an oxeye's flowers.
There was none in the forest
 running on four feet
 whirring on two wings
that did not come to listen
to the Father making joy:
even the forest's mistress
leaned her breasts upon the fence.
There was none in the water
 moving with six fins
that did not come to listen:
even the water's mistress
drew herself up on a rock
clambered up on her belly.

THREE STEPS TO BECOMING A FINNISH UTOPIAN SOCIALIST PIONEER

1. Pick salal berries.
2. Crush them.
3. Pour over rice.

THE LAST YEAR HAS BEEN THE MOST DIFFICULT IN OUR HISTORY

In addition to our very limited productive means, financial affairs were in a bad way. This coupled with the fire in which 11 people lost their lives and many were left without clothes and shelter, had indeed put us into a serious plight.

Lack of shelter also caused the death of many head of cattle during the Winter.

Agriculture has not advanced very far as yet.

Success in fishing has been prevented by lack of nets and experience.

Dogfish have been used for the production of oil for machinery and for lighting.

The cobbler's and tailor's shops have been busy, but the lack of materials has caused some shortage in wearing apparel.

The wild salal berry has also been extensively used.

The work itself has gone on very smoothly but the price of logs has fallen.

We intend to cease the sale of logs as soon as possible.

We intend in the near future to set up a new general dining room and kitchen, a hospital, a children's home and a school. In spite of renewed applications the government has as yet not set to work to get us a school house and teacher of the English language.

Cultural pursuits have also been followed as far as our economic conditions have permitted. On Sunday evenings discussions have been held, plays have been presented and a band and a choir have been inaugurated.*

* Austin Mäkelä's report to the Kalevan Kansa Colonization Company, Feb. 15th, 1904



Band at Sointula in 1903. The "Band-Master" sitting in the foreground is Voitt Peippo.

Figure 3. (Dreams of Freedom).

First of August was a beautiful day. I prepared M.K.'s room as we expected him home. In the evening we walked in moonlight to the pier. Later we went to a dance where we stayed for half an hour. We left and sat back on the pier.

Under an iron bedstead I found a human skull, and a few feet from it...a baby's body all shrivelled up. A woman came hurrying up as I was trying to get the body... I asked her if she had lost anyone in the fire. She murmured something about not understanding English and then with a wail in her voice that...I will never forget...said "baby, baby" and pointed into the steaming ruins. I could not say or do anything. She...put her apron to her eyes and a moment later had gone.*

* J. Warren Bell, sent by colony creditors to assess assets before granting more loans. His comments on the fire, January 29th, 1903.

I don't believe you. Why would she speak English at that moment? Why fumble with another language? There was no need.

Here's what I think. I think she spoke in Finnish. I think she said *vauva*. *Vauva! Vauva!* she wailed, and pointed into the steaming ruins.

I think she didn't speak at all. She saw the body blackened; all shrivelled up. Like the way paper gets when you burn it; it shrinks, curls into itself. She saw this, smelt the burnt flesh, and couldn't find words. A ragged, tight scream – bits of it stuck in her throat, like shreds of cloth on a nail.

She pointed: seems so mathematical, precise.

But even her pointing was wobbly. It went out of the lines. Her body uncontrollable.

Proof:

It disappeared. She put her apron to her eyes and a moment later had gone. As if all she needed to vanish was that gesture. Her body was that loose, that watery.

They sent someone to check our assets before granting our loan. Truth is, Kurikka had nothing by then, none of us did. And if Kurikka was embezzling, who'd know it now? 13 tonnes of supplies, \$10,000 in damages, census lists and company ledger. Some say he did it himself. Never mention that to Voitto – he'd bite your head off, Kurikka his idol and all, even now. You couldn't get him to think straight about that man, even after the bridge, and then to up and follow the bastard -

well, lots of us did.

238 of us after, and that's Voitto on the floor with his baton. It was Christmas, the wreaths on the wall that Irma made with her girls, and her youngest crying with the sliver she got.

Eight of them dead and gone almost a year before and Maria and Ann and Victor too. We kept them close after that. Couldn't get the smoke out of us - wool especially was bad. Lyyli hitting her own face at the funeral, and her sobs all torn out of her like something she wanted to hold onto. And Mika sitting in the dirt, playing with sticks, burying them further and further in the ground. Dirt all over his face, a stream of snot hanging from his nose. I cleaned him up, sang to him, a song that Aiti used to sing to me. Saw him killing a frog a few days later, stomped on it. A tree frog, about the size of my thumb.

I didn't say anything.

Lyyli's face was bruised for days.

I was 20 then.

KURIKKA'S DEFENCE

Upon seeing that sorrow and despair which had gained power over our weaker companions after this dreadful tragedy, I tried to gather myself. Realizing my responsibility to encourage and comfort my friends I uttered a line from a renowned thinker, "Tribulations are at times disguises for blessings." Who knows what benefits this tragedy might bring with it? I would not have been able to believe that an ordinary mortal human could understand this in any other manner than as fatherly advice to reawaken new hopes among those who had sunk into despair. At any rate there are such black souls here who understood it to have been proof of my criminality and guilt.

Heads and my loved one's locks, I admire his eyes

GROCERY SHOPPING

And he launched the craft
pushed the boat into the waves:
he himself sat in the stern
like a sack of Finnish salt.

We waited.

He returned with a lap organ.
But music, he said, feeds our souls.



Figure 5. Women and children of Sointula, circa 1902. (Dreams of Freedom)

Wool drying in the sauna:
smell of wool and cedar

and rain,
patter of rain on the ferns.

We'd have cups of coffee
in the kitchen:

cups and cups,
and us up to our elbows

in potato peels,
taking turns

reciting poems.

Note:

This photograph was taken in December, 1903,
when Ida was three months gone.

THE MAIN REASON FOR THIS SPLIT IS FEMALE EMANCIPATION

A woman who does not allow nature to take its course because of society's taboos, religious taboos, fear of pregnancy, is a victim of double morality, a victim of society.

(In this country, where relations between the sexes are free beyond all restraint, I have observed that if I wanted to misuse my electrical influence, which I possess in great measure, against young inexperienced women, the most delicate would helplessly become my victim.)

A wife is forced to sell herself to one man against much worse terms, much worse bargain than a prostitute. She doesn't even have the right to choose the time or place.

*

Electricity will improve your love, heal you from illness. It is as important as food.

When there is no electricity, the opposite will happen: infections, syphilis.

Should children be conceived when there is no electricity, they will not be successful or bright.

*

Opposites attract. If you live with the man you have electricity with, you will start thinking like him and will no longer be opposites. You will become too familiar. You will not have good electricity.

What is faithfulness? Dogs, slaves are faithful.

If you're already married, get divorced.

*

(As a result of my writing many wives started to oppose the passionate advances of their husbands and the latter became angry and jealous and in the end started to believe that their wives had fallen in love with me and for that reason had betrayed them.)

I came only to learn and to work together with others in order to improve women's position, but the hoped-for results were very small.

I saw how few women knew how to grow into an independent person.

I discovered my own selfishness and my nature and it was *Saintula* that took away from me forever the right to private ownership.

SAMPO I.

Once upon a time, the gap-toothed crone Louhi found a hero crying. *For this I weep all my life, grieve throughout my days: I've swum to strange lands to quite unknown doors.* He was sobbing like a kid in a supermarket. Louhi said, I'll take you back to your own lands if you make me a magical mill. The hero Väinämöinen said he didn't know how, but he'd get his friend Ilmorinen to do it. So Louhi gives him food and drink and a stallion and takes him away. And Ilmorinen comes up and makes the Sampo, and Louhi is charmed, and she gives her own daughter to him for keeps.

Then the daughter is killed, and Ilmorinen goes back up to Pohjola for the second daughter. But Louhi didn't know. So she asks how her first child was, her darling. And Ilmorinen says she's dead, and now he's come for her other girl: *give, my dear mother-in-law, and put your other daughter where my late wife lived – in her sister's place.* But Louhi says she'll not allow her girl to sweep up his shit. And Ilmorinen pushes into the house and says to the daughter: *Right, come with me, girl in your sister's place, where my late wife lived, to bake honey-bread and to brew the beer.* And he dumps her in the sleigh. She tells him he's horrible, and she'd rather be wedded to wolves. He gets fed up and turns her into a gull, and she spends the rest of her life mewing at the tips of rocks.

Then, he and the great Väinämöinen decide to steal the Sampo, and they sneak off and put it in V's boat. And Louhi and the whole of that *evil realm* awake, and rush off after them, and there's a storm and a battle, and the Sampo falls into the sea and smashes into little pieces. Finland gets the bits that wash up to shore, and out of these bits comes ploughing and sowing, every kind of growth, harvests, corn. Some of it turns, thickens into barley beer and loaves of rye. And Louhi? All she gets is the handle off the lid: *And that's why Northland is poor, life in Lapland is breadless.*

SAMPO II.

The one thing I want is a magic Sampo – a mill that grinds out flour and meal on one side, salt on the other, and coins on the third side. Where is the hero who can forge the Sampo?

The maker of Sampo left the North Country, a man-eating country, a country that drowns heroes. He left the place of Harmony,* he left the people of Kaleva** behind.

I will give my daughter to whoever will make me a magic Sampo, she said.

Kurikka resigned 2 days and 72 years before my best friend was born.

He left with half the colonists and set up lodgings on Heatley Avenue.
I hate that street.
It reminds me of a girl I knew.

The book calls the people who left, his followers,
though in the photograph,
he's standing at the back, far from the instruments.

Yes, he said. If she agrees, we will take your daughter with us. We will take her sisters, her girlfriends too.

(His hand was in a bright-worked mitten
the other on the maid's breasts
his foot in a German boot
the other between her thighs.)

Note: to build a Sampo requires practical skill. Poetry is not enough.

* translation of Sointula

** translation of Kalevan Kansa, the Sointula joint stock company

They left the women in the New Year. Women, Kurikka said, were nothing but trouble. They ruin everything.

Sammon Takojat: the forgers of the place of Sampo. In Webster's Corners, they did not make any mills that ground out flour and meal and corn and salt and coins. They were not skilled enough for that. For 6 months, they forged the place where the Sampo was to be built. It is a cold land, they say, a land of snow and ice. Kurikka went on tour. He got a letter. They were tired of being celibate, they wrote. They were tired of being poor. His presence was no longer required.

(I know now where in Corners Ida and Voitto lived. They lived just below where the Prov. jail is. That property is all houses now.)

I started writing to a woman I've never met. Because of *Ida Strom with cows*. One cow faces the camera. The other stands sideways, her pendulous udder, and the rope wrapped round her neck. She pays no attention to me, her head is bent, she eats grass and her own shadow. I can see the darkness disappear under her tongue.

A wooden post stretches and on top? A flag, a sign, a bird singing?
She wasn't you.

You're outside, the white of the page. You could be here, anywhere. The way cities and countries turn to water, the way yolk spreads; you're shedding letters, you're spinning into finches and rivers. You're like the necklace in your photograph, the one that was drawn in after, absent and seen. She was someone else, and that means you're not standing with rope in your hands, the cow eating her shadow, the bell that is not ringing. It means I lost you again, the spinning and all the papers burnt in the fire. I could dig you up, hold your bones to the light, place them on earth, but dust motes, dandelion fluff, the light and the white pages, a wild girl running, cartwheels, somersaults across grass, a flute and the ocean retreating, rushing, retreating – underneath ash, there could be anything.

1905 - 1927

Marriage is not as harmonious as one would expect. A woman's independence is left behind, a far away island that she can never reach, especially if she has children.



Figure 6. N.M. Nelson, Ishpeming, Mich, circa 1902. (Sylvi Santaga)

Peippo

Yesterday I heard a bird singing of marriage. I asked him if a woman was happier in her own house or in the home of a husband. Do you know what he answered? 'A maiden's lot is brighter than a day in summer, but a married woman's lot is colder than frost. A girl at home is as free as a berry in a garden, but a wife is like a house dog tied with a rope.' Why should I be a servant and wait upon a husband?*

* from "The Maid of the North" by Ethel Johnston Phelps. "...drawn from the Finnish saga, the *Kalevala*"

----- Original Message -----

From: Sharon Yandle

To: Brenda Felker

Sent: Friday, January 18, 2002 10:58 AM

Subject: Re: Picture Ida Strom

It's hard to imagine she would have borne 3 kids with Peippo and not married him - however, we do know that Peippo was a Kurrika supporter; and Mr. K. didn't think much of marriage, and maybe Aiti agreed with him too. Maybe after being a single parent of 3 kids she changed her mind when she decided to marry Juho. Do we know the date of the marriage? How long before Auli was born?

In 1902, Ida left Ellis Island and went to Ishpeming, Michigan. She was 19y. Able to read and write; condition of health, mental and physical, good. Marital status: S.

She was still there when she had her picture taken with another woman. N.M. Nelson, Ishpeming, Mich. had an ornate pillar decorated with white flowers. Possibly morning glory, probably fake.

Ida sat in the chair. She wore a grey blouse with a slightly greyer skirt. On her marriage finger, a ring with three pearls.

If you turn the picture over:

*Mrs. Ida Peippo
756 Kamloops St
Vancouver*

Bussix \$2,98

5364

I looked for the house on Kamloops. There was nothing. But if it were there, it would have been only a few houses from where I lived for three years. I might have walked on top of it. I might have stumbled into the kitchen, coffee cake cooling on the table.

In a later photograph, she is standing, one foot on a stool, looking past a boarded up window in Parisian Studio, Vancouver B.C. Her black silk dress is the kind that rustles when she walks. A string of pearls around her neck, and on her finger, the ring.

Did she become engaged to him during those few months she stayed in Ishpeming?

Mrs. Peippo means she married him, but she didn't, as far as we can see. No marriage records, and when she married Juho, she was *spinster*, registered under her maiden name. Lots of Finns didn't marry officially. Too hard to find a minister who spoke the language, and besides, most socialists didn't think much of the church.

On hot days, you can smell the chicken processing plant down on Hastings Street, and sometimes even the horses being ground into glue. Back then, all these sidewalks were wooden, the roads nothing but mud. Voitto's boots are on a sheet of newspaper near the door. Ida takes the pulla from the oven, cardamom hanging in the air. She puts it on the table and leaves the room. On the windowsill over the sink, the pearl ring. I don't see it lying there. I just see the sidewalk with its dates and Ds, dead grass, dog shit.

Salt on the stove, the bread toasting.
Birch, spruce, pine, cornflowers.
Ox-eye daisies and Aiti turning the bread.

It's busy here,
the city elbowing,
pushing its way into view.

I think sometimes of the sound
of Otto's spit sizzling on the stove,

and Aiti's voice rising
in response;

the darkness breathing green.

The stones in the streets were beautiful, the way they made patterns in the dirt. Just grey and brown, and the streets full of mud or dust, but sometimes when I was walking I'd look down and notice.

Basket on my arm, and everywhere horse pies, bustle of voices, and meat hanging from hooks. The junkman and the bottles and rags. The Chinaman with his pigtail, and boys sneaking up behind and chopping it off, and the Japs.

I'd go home and make pulla and pastries and all kinds of breads, till the house smelled wonderful, and Voitto would come in from playing his music, out in the street. It would be cold, the tips of his ears all red. We wouldn't say anything at first, we'd just look at each other and smile. Then he'd laugh, and give me money for the tin.

I was working too, doing some washing when I could, but mostly cleaning houses, and Voitto did odd jobs. Saturday evenings, we'd have friends over for dinner, and afterwards, we'd push back the table and dance to Mauno's fiddle, or listen to Anni sing. She had a lovely voice.

35826

BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES REGISTRATION ACT.

MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH.

To the Registrar of District No. British ColumbiaI hereby certify that I attended Raikka Sylvi Piippo

who was apparently aged, or was stated to be

aged 19 months that I last saw her onthe 9th day of June, 1907, thatshe died on the 9th day of June, 1907at 848 Healey Ave Vancouver B.C.; that the cause of her deathwas Tubercular Meningitisand that the disease continued about one weeks.

Signature

W. B. Bennett

Profession

Medical

Residence

Vancouver, B.C.

Figure 7. Death Certificate. (B.C. Provincial Archives)

Search Results for Deaths Index: 1 Record(s) Displayed

1

Name: **Bayepo Sylvi Peippo**
 Event Date: 1907 6 9 (Yr/Mo/Day)
 Age: 1
 Event Place: Vancouver

Digital Image Available for Purchase

*

Known as Sylvi. Originally thought to be a child of the second marriage: Juho Strom's girl.

I went to a town called Stromness. The grey houses and the walk I took to the graveyard near the sea with the wind blowing. Strom means river. Peippo is a small bird, a type of finch. I went hiking on the island Hoy. Puffins everywhere, nesting in the layered rock. Puffins are not finches. I don't think I have ever seen a finch.

There are different words for wind. *Humista*: the sound of wind in pine trees. *Kohista*: the sound of wind through birch. The sound is different. One word will not replace the other.

Sylvi was a finch. Juho was a river. It is a land of birds and rivers and wind blowing through trees.

Ida slept with a bird, a musician, and from that union came six. Three of them lived for awhile, smashing up boats and sleeping under viaducts, drinking turpentine till their eyes turned yellow. Juho Strom died from a sliver in his hand. A river with a sliver. And the Sylvi bird died of a smallpox vaccination. Years later, when my aunt got her vaccinations, her mother said, *Don't tell your grandmother. It will kill her.*

I looked for the river. But there isn't one anymore. Just a sentence in a guidebook. Does *strom* even mean *river*? I looked in a Finnish dictionary, and there was nothing. I'm at the point now where I need to hold brown feathers, touch a small sick bird. Dangle my

feet in a poisoned river, hear the wind blowing through birch and pine. *Humista.*
Kohista. It is a lullaby. Ida might've murmured this to Sylvi before she died. Sylvi lay
in her crib in Event Place: Vancouver. The stinking grey, the fish on the wharf, and later,
that chicken processing plant on Hastings Street. *Humista.* *Look up at the ceiling, the*
shadows on the wall. Look at the way you hold my finger. The creaking floorboards, and
your father in the next room, playing his horn.

I twisted the dishtowel into rope,
slammed a plate against the wall.
Voitto swept up the pieces.
He held me; he was different then.

He played the horn for her.
All he could do.
I walked to the window.
The mock orange blossoms, the crushing feet.

Fruit flies climb the windows, black smudges on the glass. Carpenter ants shine through the cracks in the floor. Under her bare feet, their bodies break.

She grabs a corner of wallpaper and pulls it. Sits at the window, curling and uncurling the flowered paper in her hand. The blue bellflowers, the yellow poppies. Puts it in her pocket. It is the only thing she takes from the room.

Then the shoes (though she forgets stockings).
And out before they can stop her.

Sylvi. And the wallpaper in her pocket curled
around her finger like a ring.

Three days. Three days she's gone and the man sits in the chair watching the shadows on the wall. There is food left over from the funeral. He eats. Pulla, cabbage rolls, prune fool, Munajuusto. Stuffed salmon, Karjalan piirakat, fruit soup, gingerbread. Chews ice when he's thirsty.

The picture of Sylvi is face down on the table. He wants to break the frame, run his finger against the shards of glass, watch the blood drip onto the solemn face. But he does not. He is a peaceful man.

*

-No! NO! Stop it! He doesn't understand!

-I'll make him then.

-Ma! Ma! Maaaa!

Huddled underneath the viaduct.
The piano box.

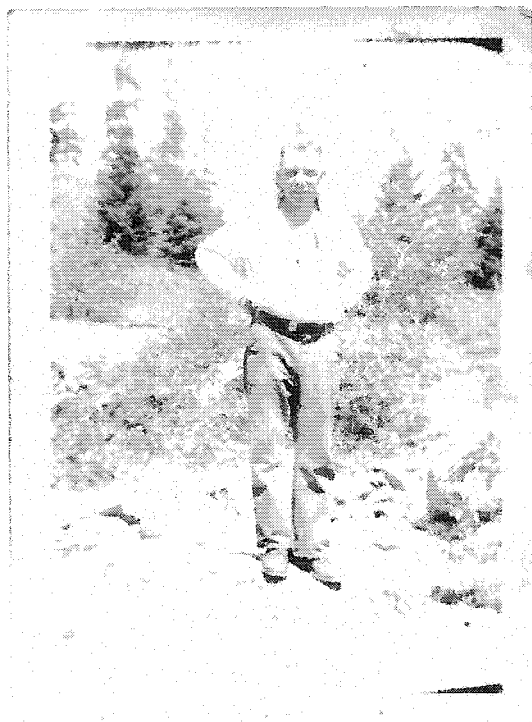


Figure 8. Lal. (Sylvi Santaga)

When she was walking. Or as she sat at the table, covering the page with scratches, and a hand went out to cup her breast. This when she was alone. Her hand on the bright cotton dress.

A body silent; blind eyes squeezed shut –
if you looked at this, how would it appear to you?

The afternoon sun shines onto the scratched wood, the pen rests on a blank page.
Ida's head is turned away. One hand heavy on her chest.

There is no entrance.
The body sealed, she doesn't speak.
The eyes blank.

I am robbing a grave, my fingers
scrabbling through dirt, eyelashes.

This little worm crawled in on a dark night.
Her eyes shut.

We are born with worms crawling through our eyelashes.
We can't see them, but they're still there.

In every picture, she's not smiling.
If she smiled, maybe I could write happy poems.

I am a sad writer. We sit at scarred tables,
stare into the dark.

He slides in, and she looks past the distended face, mouth open, gills contracting, and out again.

Or does she close her eyes, like Victoria said to – but she is no Englishwoman. Though she does think of it sometimes, the boat trip and the train ride to Liverpool, the third class carriage. She had a glass of water. The country packed into stone walls, neat hedgerows. The water tasted stale.

And in.

She wrote her name in the condensation on the window. Sucked on a hank of her hair.

And then he is shuddering, shuddering, the spasms of his body in hers, and then it is quiet, and he pulls away. Later, he will tell her that Lal is not his.

She wrote her full name, and clenched the side of her fist against the window. Put four dots above the smudge; turned it into a bare footprint, climbing up the glass.

The white curtain, and Voitto drinking coffee. *Who was it?* he yelled once, but mostly he was silent. We didn't realize. Not till he was a bit older, and then just slowly, like the way he didn't crawl till late and his mouth open all the time. The whole time I was heavy with Lal, the rain and the people pushing past, hurrying to get somewhere else. And Voitto just looking at me strangely.

I wasn't up for much talking, anyway. All that summer when I talked it felt muffled, like I was speaking through cheesecloth, *itkuliina*. We – Eila, Hilja, me – made raspberry jam, blackberry, crabapple jelly. My hair sticking to my forehead, and then to go out to nothing but rain. And once, I saw dirt rolling down the street and I looked closer and it was birds.

I still found myself thinking of what I'd say to Sylvi, what kinds of stories I'd tell. I had wanted a daughter so much. I thought, when she gets older, I'll show her the diary, maybe even give it to her as a present. And when he was born, I didn't mean to, but I looked away and Voitto put down his coffee, I heard the sound of the mug on the table. I loved him then, I wanted to stay, and I had a baby in my arms and three more coming, but I can still hear the clunk of that mug on the wood, and I wonder if that's when I knew.

A fishing boat; calm water. A bay, or lake. Splash of sun in the front and back. Trees surround. A figure in black stands on a boulder. It could be a man.

At the top of the photograph, the words *To Lalli*.

Is he the lone figure on the rock, black spindly legs, left one thinner than the right, white face blank, no arms in sight? Don't move, you'll ruin the photograph. Stay still and you're stuck on the rock forever.

Did she give him this photograph? He collected photographs, cut out pictures of boats from magazines. Big boats, small boats, fishing skiffs, battleships: he had wooden boats he played with in the water, his slight palsy making them shake; he sat on the pebbles and the boats climbed the hills that were his knees, a storm up ahead.

Maybe I've got it wrong, and the picture isn't of the boat at all, but of the light that spills over the frame. The sky is smooth light, rushing into the trees. The trees are becoming light, and on the beach, the rocks. He used to lock Lal in the closet for days. *Stop it! stop it!* she'd yell, but the door slammed. *Ten and still scared of the dark?* and the *uh-huh uh-huh* breaking against the wood.

So afterwards, she gave him light. She took him to places where he had to squint at the camera, his face scrunched up, and that goofy grin. She took pictures of the light, she gave him this photograph, she wrote *To Lalli*. She put a period after his name because she wanted something strong, she didn't want it to dwindle off as if it were nothing special, an incomplete thought. I got it wrong. It wasn't that he was stuck on the rock, but that he wasn't trapped in a closet. It was light and trees, a fisherman's boat, and her child on the rock. *Look, look at me!* he yelled, and she looked, tears standing in her eyes.

JACK'S BIRTH

Mud on Voitto's trousers,
1909.

Voitto, pacing,
stops. Brushes legs
with shaking hands.

We are concerned only with death. Name of deceased, time of death, place of burial, cremation, or removal, cause of death, was there an autopsy? Length of residence at place of death, last day seen alive, place where death was contracted, Registered No. FORM 6, SCHEDULE B.—Deaths. (DO NOT USE BALLPOINT PEN)

*

How to chart absence:

two years of being barren,
two years of no deaths,
no births
to become deaths,
nobody needed
to fix the microfilm.

(And a rumor of Voitto in Chase River.)

a scrawl of blood between her thighs.

In the year 1910 on the 28th of April I was looking at Halley's comet that I could see with my naked eye for the first time. This happened at 04:00 in the morning.

Voitto sits at his desk, chin propped on his hand. Ida walks in, kisses the top of his head. Shadows of trees on the wall, light that glints off his watch-chain, shine of the apple against the wood. Did I mention there's an apple? McIntosh. Fruit resting on pine.

Their yard is too small to admit apple trees, peach trees, pear trees, plum. Even flowers don't grow in this rock-strewn patch of land. And so this apple was bought or picked elsewhere. Taken from a basket on Hastings Street, or picked off a tree in Webster's Corners. For let me be honest: though their children are born in Vancouver, evidence suggests Ida and Voitto live elsewhere. In 1910, a Peippa, Vito, farmer, lived in Webster's Corners.

Possible, then, that this apple grew on their own farm, and Voitto picked it himself, though Ida could be walking in a white dress, the fruit in her hand. Step into his study, place it on the desk, and if the children are fretful, what of it? Enough for now, this small gift resting on wood.

You see, I have not yet relinquished the desk, or the letter he writes upon its grains. Though this too can be given up, just as a city vanishes in seconds, Hastings Street and the people without a sound. And what does a poor musician/farmer need with a desk? It's carried off and the apple falls, rolls onto the floor. Ida kisses his head at the breakfast table, and the apple lies in a corner, bruised.

If we are to believe anything, let us believe that she kissed. The light shines through the window. Whether farm or city, there is always light, the shadows of trees on the wall.

Eila and I climbed willow trees when no one was around. We'd knot up our skirts and scramble up the trunk, sit amongst the leaves. Once she stayed back and watched the babies and I ran down the street, my hair coming out of its pins.

I stretched out my arms. The leaves blowing up and falling again, everywhere falling. And the wind shoved my hands into a lamppost, and I pushed it off, and ran.

And at the park there was my willow tree, and I climbed and sat on its largest branch and watched the storm. I looked through leaves at the earth below, and the willow shook and my legs pressed hard around the wood, hair blowing into my face.

She puked on the side of the road, Voitto walking ahead. Her hands blotches of sweat on her dress, dust on her shoes. Six tossed in her guts - elbows, heel, back aching.

Miscarriage: smashed frame, bent wheel,
blood down those fat legs.

And the ones named. Voitto Kulleroo, Bayepo Sylvi, Kalevi: tubercular meningitis, dysentery, scarlet fever: how beautiful they sound on the tongue. Roses on his skin.

Bury him and her and him, teeth marks on her hands, a great dizziness where she struck herself, and the minister's dry voice.

Fucked again and again and again. Five months, one month, six months after they went, and her breasts swell, her puking begins.

All the hospitals full, and King Ed's auditorium packed to the brim. Eila died there, and Sulo almost, but he pulled through in the end. None of the boys got sick, but Voitto did — he'd been working at Britannia Mine then. Didn't last long — after he saw one man's scarred fingers, he said that's it, he wouldn't do anything that'd ruin his hands, and so back he came, a few bills in his pocket and a bit of a cough. Ulli ran to be picked up, but Jack just kept eating his soup, and Lal folded himself into the shadows.

I made soups and bran, pine needle poultices. White masks, the dying with black skin, brown tongues, Eila down at King Ed's, and I didn't even know till it was too late. The bed creaked with Voitto's shakes. He thought he had no hands, *they cut my hands*, he'd sob, and oh, I felt for him still, though there was Lal making himself small, and you knew that'd never change. Voitto's handkerchiefs soaked in blood, and all the blood in the white basin, streaks of it on my arm, and Ulli screaming at the sight.

Voitto went some weeks after, back up to Sointula. I remember before he left, he polished his horn, rubbed the dust off it so soft. It was beautiful, that gentleness. It was a cloudy morning, the sun fighting to get through, the kids laughing outside, and all the thousands dead.

I stood in the bay and nothing
but the sun burning a raven's feather into the ice.

The swath and white of it.

And these brown leather albums with the black pages, black triangles, crowded lives
pressed like the flowers at the back.

But there's no Voitto.

Even in the early pictures, when the colonists stood on the rocks near a waterfall,
or sat on the ground, even in the first Vancouver shots, he's not there.

The feather dropped from the body, from the wing as the bird was flying.

And it cut into the ice, though the world was still quiet.

He left more behind.

In museums, there are photographs of him, sitting at the front, with his horn.

The music trailed away long after he left.

And of course, the children and his smiles flitting across their moving faces.

But most of all, the bitterness the absence of his photographs suggests.

She could have thrown them in his face, torn them into pieces. *Take them!* she could
have yelled, or perhaps one evening he sat on the floor
and peeled himself away from the black pages.

In the kitchen, she was smashing plates.

No broad sweep of ice and soft relinquishment, the faint faint flapping of wings.

(I lie. There was one picture she kept. He was 14. He held his horn. She wrote on it, in her fine hand, *Peippo*. Not his first name, just his last. This picture of a 14 year-old boy: long before he played for her, before he left, before his life cut away from hers, leaving a mark upon the ground.)

We don't know where Voitto Kulleroo is buried. He's not with the other children, or in Sointula. He died on Richards Street, right where there's a new apartment tower. A Lester, A.J., steamboatman, lived there.

We know that on September 26th, 1904, Voitto Kulleroo died of inanition and dysentery. That means he was weak from hunger; he couldn't keep anything down. And he kept shitting. For one week, he barfed and shat in the house that became a tower, Xs still on the windows.

We don't know why Ida was there, instead of in Sointula. It's true that she could've left for Vancouver once the baby got sick. Or maybe she was visiting friends.

Let us leave this a gap. Like the fontanel that never closed.



Figure 9. The swath and white of it. (Rachel Lebowitz)

Strom

In 1904, Kurikka asked that the women help finance Sointula by donating all their jewelry, including wedding rings, into a province-wide lottery. Newspaper articles praised these women for their sacrifice of worldly goods.

*

Three pearls on your left hand. A strand of pearls around your neck. A pearl brooch.

Why do I think *wildflowers* when I think of you: foxglove, snapdragon, forget-me-not? Field covered in dandelion clocks and knee-high grass. Cedar logs with the scrawls left by ants, a journey traced in wood.

If I watch carefully enough, I will see where you begin, which turn you will make next. And see in this journey something beautiful, these spirals and loops in cedar and in the purple hollow of the flower. In this girl who hops on a boat and travels thousands of miles to the wilderness, the peeling bark of the arbutus tree, and the waves in your ears at night.

Not the cultured pearls you never let go. In the photographs, you wear them before you arrive, and after, in Vancouver – God, it was provincial then, the mud flats and Cowshit Alley – but striving, that smell of sawdust. Who knows why you didn't hand them in? Could be you stopped believing in his world, that mixture of worship and hatred: *these women need discipline, a patriarchal hand*. Loggers in Hogan's Alley swigging beer; Balmoral, Patricia, Astoria. Neon signs and the Kozy Korner store, where your grandchild would open the door for pennies, and look, under that viaduct, your son sleeping in a crate. But there was style, too, the black silk dresses and the photographs you'd all send home, looking just like real ladies. And the fur stole, the clothes you'd let your granddaughters try on, and they'd twirl around giggling, teetering in high heeled shoes.

Sointula has no need for gold and diamonds, he said. *We have pine trees* – but you held onto those pearls. And when Voitto wanted to go back up there, you refused, hung onto this tired city with its junk and jewels, where people scurry in the rain, their dresses trailing in dirt.

1919

It's March, her little sister's dead.
Ida's been flirting with the miner who sleeps downstairs.
She dusts his room, leaves a flower on his sheets.

Her mother walks slowly
Down the stairs, her hair
Tied back in a neat black snood.

June: grey light through windows,
Sunday afternoons.

Her father asks.
He wets the cloth,
Washes his dead wife's face.

The miner grabs her as she turns to go.
She falls backwards,
Hairpins dropping to the floor.

In Oulu now it is never dark.



Figure 10. Juho and Ida. (Sylvi Santaga)

Two months pregnant when they married and she wrote *spinster* on the form. So no sons attended the office by the Swedish Lutheran Church, Reverend Carl Zaar officiating. Or if there were sons, they were the children of Isaacson, Thos, prop of Finnish Hall/Mission Rms/Gospel Hall/Lutheran Church/Templeton Steam Baths.

Before him and wife Hilda, there was A. Antilla, confectioner: fudges, liquorice allsorts, taffy, candied apples. Across the street, the girls at Central Mission Home for Girls smelled the air and sighed.

But wait, that was years ago, in 1914, the year after Voitto and Ida moved into the building, the year after their five-week-old son died. Beginning of war and Ulli's life.

No apples there now, the girls long gone. Johnson, Alex, who lived in the rear of the building in '16 and '17, has left, and Isaacson, rancher turned proprietor, has moved in. The screaming baby a pauper at Mountain View, buried far from his sister, and who knows where his oldest brother lies. Ida returns to scrub the floors and dust the banisters, and does she know that the miner downstairs will be her husband soon? It's 1920 and no one's wearing poppies yet, that'll be next year, when Auli will be born, and they'll sell eight million in Britain alone. By the time she and Juho enter the office, Ida is eating crackers, blancmange, pale white porridge, holding her gaze to the floor, but no matter, this will be the golden child, the girl who lives.

They go back home, his arm around her, and witnesses Thos and Hilda walking behind. They must know that she's no spinster. Somewhere, her sons are running, maybe down by the water, at Brighton Park. It's foggy now. Next month, Armistice Day and the parades, water black and cold.

In the park near my house, women with parasols smelling of linen and vinegar, button boots stepping round the thin green curls of goose shit. And this is where I'd walk as a child, this pool filled with ducks, thin sheen of ice like egg membrane, and the families on the dock catching fish.

This park so near the place she lived – look, can you see her there? Right on that log, where I sat with my first boyfriend, when he touched the side of my breast. And there, by the swings, the damp canvas.

Maple leaves crisp on the grass. *Ida with Child*. The buttoned boots, and her hands full of leaves. *Again? Again?* Auli laughing in her pram. The way the sky darkens here, the swing damp on my jeans, and my skin shivering at his touch. They drain the pool every spring, scrub the green stains.

Again? Again? And the hands unclench, release, leaves falling into Auli's lap, a red one traced against her cheek.

When Auli was born, and after, I'd give her my finger to hold, her hand clenched. I clenched too, every anniversary of death, just as I had with the boys until the day passed and it seemed safe. That June when Auli was two, I watched, twisted my ring around and around, until the skin underneath got rubbed raw. We were at the park, watching Ulli play ball with Jack and the older boys – he always tried to fit in. Swaggering in his short pants, burping Jack's name – and Lalli sitting in the corner of the field, making pies.

I held onto her hand so tight she cried out and ran to Juho. He was standing a little ways off, watching Lal with sadness in his eyes. It was the sadness that got me – you know, after all those years, I didn't want pity, wouldn't have taken it for myself, would've slapped him if he tried. But for Lal – it made me want him, the way he'd look after my boy. He wasn't a smiling man, but he held light in his eyes.

He'd named her after an opera star. After the kids had gone to bed, he'd wind the gramophone and we'd listen to her sing, the voice smooth like wood, and he'd sit there with his eyes closed, his hand on my hair.

I watched Jack and Ulli spitting on the field, and Lal grinning down onto his pies. I looked at Auli on Juho's shoulders. No one needed me. I sat under a tree, felt the bark rough against my back.

July, there's cantaloupe with ice cream; two weeks before Christmas, Japanese oranges. And so it goes. She's eating her favorite dessert once a year. She's playing hopscotch with peels of orange that keep their place inside the lines.

But it's grey and wet, and Ida keeps her close. All that year, the fruit appears and disappears from baskets and markets and it rains. Ulli plays the trumpet Juho got him, and Jack the piano, a Zane Grey book on the bench beside. Ida and Lal play spillikins on the floor, Juho's hand beating time on his chair. The window fogs up; the icicles melt.



Figure 11. Circa 1927. From left to right: Juho, Auli, Ida, Lal, and unknown (probably Auno, Juho's father). (Sylvi Santaga)

OCTOBER 4TH, 2002

SHARON YANDLE:

The boys went to Hastings School, same as Aunt Ivy. She remembers Jack was called "Fat Strom." They took Strom's name, maybe he adopted them. He was a real disciplinarian, very strict, but he paid for music lessons, took a particular interest in Father. Mother used to say that Strom had plans for Jack and Father. They were going to go to university.

They were both extremely bright. Jack skipped at least two grades, but it got too hard for him, and he dropped out. Father could've skipped as well, but Aiti wouldn't let him and so he got bored and quit.

That was after Strom died. He'd kept them in school, but once he was gone, they just ran wild. Jack eloped with a wealthy girl, a Plantageus. There are still Plantageuses around. When her parents tracked them down, they had the marriage annulled. They'd lied about their age.

*Through the bones, through the
flesh, through the warm flesh*

You can almost see them
under that white shirt,
black jacket. He doesn't know it yet.
Look at that photograph, hand on the blond
man's shoulder, hand on Ida's chair.

When he sits on the steps
with his daughter on his knee.

When his watch-chain loops across
his chest in two semi-circles,
cartoon breasts. When he leans
against the fence. When he holds coiled
wire, his feet on the tracks. When the man
next to him cleans his nails with a knife.

When Auli wore her white dress, white
kneesocks with the ribbon trim, and sat
on his knee on the steps,

there were three in his arm,
creeping.

STROM, JUHO W FL LYR WESTERN HDWD FL H 120 S. KAMLOOPS

Watch the hydrangeas bloom
blue, miniature roses
against the basement window.

He held his daughter here –
Diffuse Cellulitis & Septicaemia
CONTRIBUTORY _____

(duration) _____ yrs _____ mos 11 dys.

(which makes November 28th the day
of disease: brown
twigs like slivers

and dead soggy leaves.)

Ida went for a walk on the beach.
It was Friday.

She sat on a log
and watched the sunset.

She would never be pregnant again.

1931 - 1953

Rise ye people, raise your heads
Promise this to yourself
Always be ready to give assistance
Whenever your help is needed



Figure 12. Makeshift shelter in the “Jungle” at the City dump during the depression, 1931. (City of Vancouver Archives)

The Dirty Thirties

Ulli crouched on top of the train, newspaper in his shoes.
Clang and dust through his hair.

Wood, cardboard, sheet metal, seat of a chair, hinges, grates.
Held in place with rocks.

Lal stayed home and became a miner.
Lost his hair in the explosion. His hands shook.

*We have been feeding now half of Finland of whom not more than 5%
will ever become worthy of the name Canadians.*

25,000 vagrants, criminals, reds

— deported.

THE BOARDING HOUSE

There are three words: *mänty*, *honka*, *petäjä*
but none have the sharp edge of *pine*,
a letter read over and over, a scatter of needles at our feet.

We share our trees with a love sundered,
stretched thin, snapping –

is it any wonder she never liked this language
but filled her home with Finns,
let them pour out, congregate on the steps?

She has baked the thick loaves, has patted the great dumplings, with her nimble palms,
with ten bent fingers; she has raised the loaves gently, she has fed the guests promptly,
with plenty of pork, with crusty fish pies...

mouthfuls of melted butter and fistfuls of cream pancakes
there was salmon on the plates the cups were brimming

(this lintel of lamb bones;
this table adorned with gold.)

Auli fell off the porch, broke her arm – and the sheets on the line, linen bleached in the spring sun; and the men on the steps with the smoke curling from their pipes like water tossed on hot stones, like the milkman's horse in winter.

It was home, men scraping their boots at the door, and the wives picking stinging nettles and salmonberries, and Jack swinging Ida round the kitchen, dishcloth still in her hand.

She never turned away a soul. A port in the storm, they said, and Auno drew a birch tree on Auli's cast, and Ida tucked a strand of hair behind her ear, and traced streets on a map with her finger. A dust of flour on her arms.

THE MUSICIAN

Seven years absence, then he's back in Sointula, pulling at the line, fingers hooked in gills, and whatever happened to that Italian fiddler arrested in Vancouver for refusing to work because it'd ruin his hands?

One of the reasons she left him, but he's forgotten that vow, or feels he has no choice, no woman to plunge her hands into lye. So now he guts the fish, slides the blade up towards his palm, the heaps of dead. And in '34, starts hacking away at cedar and pine and blueberry canes as high as trees. His hands as callused as any other.

We lost the house in '35. I couldn't pay the taxes. Auli was heartbroken. She said goodbye to every room. Lal didn't understand, didn't understand much about that time. He rode the rods like the other boys, for a bit, but I worried about him, thought he'd get his skull crushed, so he stayed with me and Auli, shoveled snow, loaded freight, unloaded – whatever he could find. That was after he left the mine.

They tore down the jungles, sent the men packing to relief camps, digging and filling up holes – oh, the stories you'd hear. Canned Heaters, living under the Georgia Viaduct, straining canned heat through socks for the alcohol. Jack did that. He'd drink anything he could get his hands on: shoe polish, rubbing alcohol, you name it.

It was hard to find a job, especially for a woman, but I was lucky, got the job at the Columbia Hotel. Hardly any pay, of course, but room and board, and they let the kids stay with me, which was more than I'd expected. Some loggers there, mostly fishermen – you'd get regulars, they'd come right off the ship, and settle in. It was rough, but alive; no one'd pretend you didn't exist, like they'd do up in Shaughnessy. I had my hands full, scrubbing after those boys, but it was a better job than most. Hilja's daughter, Anna, she worked at Burns slaughterhouse, in the sausage room. She'd wash out the casings, hours and hours in the cold.

In '38, they let me go – that was the year of the sit-down at the post office. They threw tear gas, the police with whips, and all the men tearing out of there, breaking windows on Hastings and Granville, and the police still whipping them all, on the ground and bleeding. They arrested 23, and thousands of us – me and Ulli and Auno and Riva – stood in front of the prison, yelling and hollering for them to be released. And then we moved to Powell Street Grounds, and there were ten thousand of us, singing and shouting and holding hands.

We Came...

HENDERSON'S CITY OF VANCOUVER DIRECTORY

Hastings E.

Gore Av. Intersects.

307 Gordon J

309 Orientals

311 Orientals

317 Orientals

321 Larsen & Petersen

323 Japanese

I watched fish and suns bobbing above people's heads, and the mountains in the growing dark. And you are old in a city that is grey in all the photographs: smashed windows, row after row of bunks and cattle stalls, sewing machines and fishing boats. The gigantic severed hand on the B.C. Telephone Co. float oozing sawdust. Happyland's Shoot The Chutes a grain elevator: stolid, sombre, industrial.

A little fat around your heart, the doctor said, and all I can think is heart like grey porkchop, the crisp sepia fat. It sits on the white dinner plate.

*

What arrogance, to see colour only in the lanterns and the purple hills. To see you as old, a heart like dead pig.

If I were truthful here, I'd say you probably laughed more than I. You filled the steps of your house, the kitchen with cakes. When you were on stage, stage left, stage right, it didn't matter: all eyes turned to you. Not beautiful, no, but warm, lights shining in the dark.



Figure 13. Women at Clinton Hall. (Sylvi Santaga)

HAALIN KOMMUNA [*Community At The Hall*]

Bonehill News. The Peasant's Flower.
For The Red Star. Refugees.

Theme: life and struggle in lumber camps in Canada.
 Theme: worker's struggle and love story.

Location: Finland after 1918 uprising.
 Location: Canada during the depression.

Cast: 2 women, 5 men.

*

Clinton Hall, April 21, 1940.

Ida wears a cowboy hat, someone else a fake nose.

Beneath the sky, the Finnish soldier's moustache
 gags his upper lip; on the floor,
 rough wool or fishnets picked clean,
 hooked into rugs.

The leaves hang.
 Her jutting hip:

sass so strong you can smell it.

CHARGE NEWS IS MISLEADING

JAN 1 - 1940

Hastings Auditorium on Sunday afternoon was the scene of a demonstration of Finnish-Canadians against "false allegations" about the attitude of Vancouver and Fraser Valley Finns toward Finland's struggle against the Russian invader.

The meeting of about 150 Finnish people was called to order by E. Kivri.

After some considerable discussion a resolution was adopted protesting against "willfully misleading propaganda" originating from communistic sources, and declaring undivided sympathy for the native land in the struggle against the "brutal Soviet invader."

PLEDGE LOYALTY.

The Finns also declared their loyalty to Canada, "our adopted homeland, and to the British Empire in the common struggle for a lasting and just peace."

The resolution made reference to statements appearing in the weekly publication, "The Advocate," printed in Vancouver, alleging that Finnish residents of Vancouver and Fraser Valley generally believe that Finland is being used as a base for an "imperialist attack" on the Soviet Union.

The Advocate was further accused of saying that the Finnish people are sympathetic to the "so-called people's government" of Kuusinen, set up by exiled Finnish Communists.

It was stated that the official publication of the Communistic Finnish organization of Canada—the daily newspaper Vapaus—had been influential in spreading similar false reports.

SCORE COUNTRYMEN.

The meeting condemned "those individuals of our own nationality" who were held responsible for the spreading of "insidious propaganda."

An investigation of the activities of the Finnish organization, its Vapaus newspaper and "other Communistic organizations" was also recommended.

"It is deplorable that anyone of Finnish nationality should be an accessory to degrading his own country at this time," declared R. Vapavuori, speaking in Finnish.

It was also mentioned that some Soviet-minded Finns have claimed there is no war in Finland against Russia, and no bombing of civilian population, and that news films shown of bombardments are manufactured in Hollywood studios.

PAY OWN WAY TO WAR

JAN 2 - 1940

Finns from B.C. Woods Begin 8000-Mile Trek to Fight Reds

CITY FINN GROUP ANSWERS CHARGES

JAN 1 - 1940

Charges that the activities of the Finnish Organization of Canada and its daily newspaper Vapaus should be investigated, made at a meeting of Finnish Canadians Sunday, are answered today in a letter to The Vancouver Daily Province from E. L. Kivri, president of Local 55 of the F. O. of C.

Mr. Kivri states the charges are unfounded and deplores the quibbling over what he terms "trivial matters" among the various Finnish groups.

With Finland at war, says Mr. Kivri, there is need for harmony among the Finnish factions in Canada, and that harmony is lacking.

Mr. Kivri states the rupture was caused by an unwarranted supposition that the Vancouver local was unwilling to assist the Finnish people in the present war.

The F. O. of C. will hold a public meeting in the new Croatian Workers' Educational Home, Campbell and Keefer, at 2 p.m. Sunday.

PAYING OWN WAY.

They are paying their own way, just eager to "do their best" for the gallant little country which has earned the admiration of the world with its brave stand against Russia.

Mass Meeting Not Representative Of Finn Majority

The Finnish Organization's mass meeting in the Croatian Hall Sunday afternoon, which urged co-operation between the Finnish people and Russia, does not represent the feelings either of the Finnish people or of the majority of Finns in Canada, according to Gunnar Tornroos, Finnish consul here.

Mr. Tornroos charged that only a small proportion of the 400 people at the meeting were actually Finns. The rest were of various nationalities and most of them Communists, he said.

He added that attacks on Gen. Mannerheim contained in the resolution were not based on truth.

JAN 2 - 1940

OFF TO THE WARS—It's an 8000-mile trek to the battlefields of Finland, but eleven loyal Finns have come to Vancouver to volunteer for service. Five left this afternoon and six more will go tomorrow morning.

Figure 14. "Off to the Wars." (City of Vancouver Archives)

WHITE TERROR*

White blizzard, white paper, white eyes, white out 8,342. White Butchers with white knives, slicing up reds with red blood gleaming on white snow, underneath which somewhere shining crimson another 12,000 bodies with gaunt rosy cheeks.

And in Canada, the Loyal Finns burnt our halls,

(though nothing and nothing and nothing can be proved,
not even this melted fork and charred wood and papers like a blanket over

* Refers to the deaths of communists by the nationalists ("Whites") during/after the Finnish Civil War of 1918. After 1,625 Whites were killed in the "Red Terror", the Whites retaliated by killing 8,342 Reds (not including the thousands who died of disease and starvation in prison camps). The war and its aftermath had a lasting effect on the Finns in Canada; socialists saw the Whites as *lahtarit*, or "butchers," while to the nationalists, the Reds remained forever "traitors".

THE WINTER WAR

Gallant little Finland with your Mannerheim,
white fur cap upon his head.

And children wore sheets, glided on skis at the park.
Bodies poured like taffy on the snow.

*

Even those of us who wanted to fight were forbidden, being reds:

*and if those kinds of creatures
manage to slip through our hands
they won't reach the other shore anyway.*

THE TRAITORS

They've circulated a petition to put the reds in a concentration camp, and our names are on it. They say they'll take my husband to the railroad tracks and shoot him. They come right into our house when we have people in the sauna. They shoot through my window at night. There are unexplained accidents in the mines.

LAWFUL SEIZURE

We saw the panel truck come and the men get out.
The men ripped open the hall door,
They came out with our red flag and threw it in the truck,
They took a wooden gun that we'd used as a prop,
They boarded up the windows,

our weddings and birthdays, our funerals,
our summer camps and sports fields,

(our plays, can't you see her in that photograph, can't you see the leaves hanging down
and old Väinö with the sideburns and Ida with her hand on her hip and can't you see us
all before we served the coffee and the sweets and the laughing and the children playing
in the fields and the

can't you see us shining?

...To a Great War

I found an old postcard, with the Finnish word for flogging. There were beatings in Vancouver. The computer translated: *Flogging. Perpetuate. Death.*

Old stories gain a quaintness, especially if broken. Shards of porcelain upon the floor.

I like the way gelatin must be stirred until it coats the spoon. I like the way egg whites, when beaten, become stiff with air. I like that air can stiffen and heat can clothe a spoon. I like that water becomes ice.

I like the impetus of history. A riot. A fire. A war. Munitions workers with yellow skin. Here's a man with shellshock. Here's a woman with yellow hands. A man catches someone's eyeball, *a gobstopper*. Words change into words.

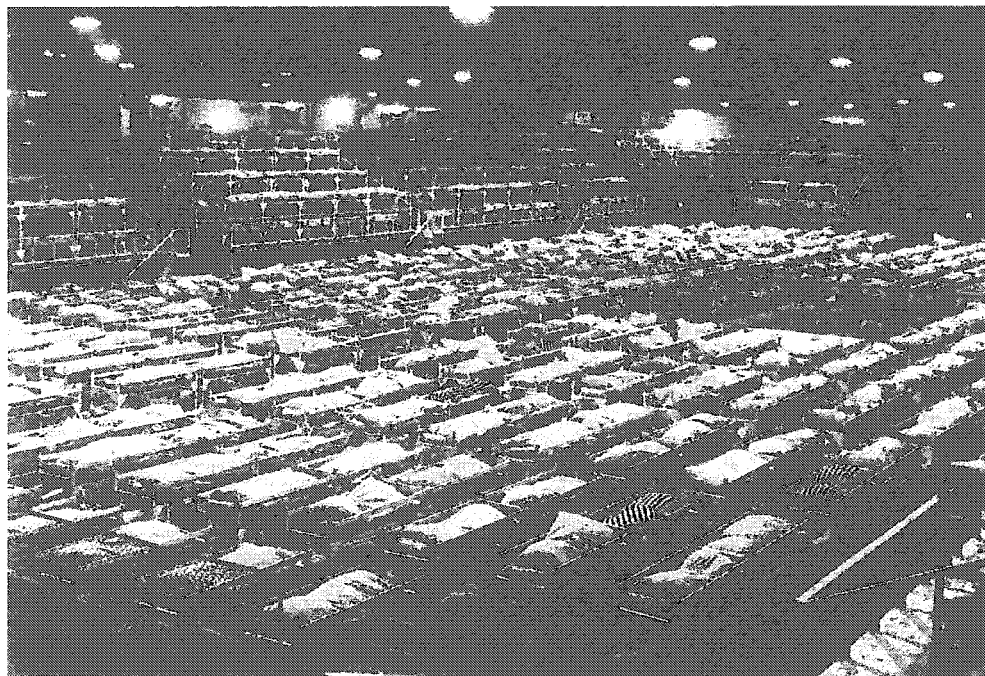


Figure 15. Japanese Men's Dormitory, Hastings Park Evacuation Centre, 1942 (Pacific National Exhibition)

Here's a war story. The livestock building smells of manure. Maggots. The toilets, a sheet metal trough. Ten showers for 1,500 women.

Ida no longer lives near here. She has moved downtown, with her sons Jack (grinder at Reliance foundry) and Lalli (helper at Burrard Dry Dock). It's not known where she worked. The city directory simply describes her as *wid*.

The British Columbia Security Commission is proud to report that they have provided 1,542,371 meals at *raw food cost* of 9.33¢ a meal.

This may have been the time when she was a seamstress. Who knows what she thought, as she threaded the needle and pumped her foot, far from the grounds with the hastily erected fence.

Quietly, At Midnight

Canada, Britain Now At War With Finns

DEC 8 1941

(By Associated Press.)

LONDON, Dec. 8.—Great Britain quietly and formally went to war against Finland, Hungary and Rumania yesterday because they are fighting on Germany's side against Soviet Russia.

(Canada, New Zealand and India and other British countries quickly followed Britain's lead.)

NOTICE

All persons over the age of sixteen years, of Roumanian, Hungarian or Finnish nationality, are required by law to report in person to the Registrar of Enemy aliens nearest to where they reside, on or before February 7th, 1942, accompanied where necessary by an interpreter.

In conformity with the policy of the Government of Canada as expressed by the Prime Minister in his broadcast of December 6th, 1941, such Roumanian, Hungarian and Finnish nationals will, upon compliance with this order, be issued with a Certificate exempting them from the provisions of the Defence of Canada Regulations relating to Enemy Aliens, except in cases where it is inconsistent with the safety of the State to do so.

S. T. WOOD,
Registrar General of Enemy Aliens

The office of the Registrar for this district is

located at:.....

Figure 16. Clipping. (City of Vancouver Archives)
Poster. (From Heroes to Enemies)

We woke to telephone poles plastered with notices that we had to get fingerprinted. Not me, not the children, but Minna and Vihtori and Vihtori's cousin, they all had to report to the station. And all those Loyal Finns too, all of them walking down the dusty road, their shoes squeaking. The newspapers called them "northern Nazis" and the fascists here were furious, but what did they expect? They still sang the anthem, stood in front of the flag, hung pictures of Mannerheim in their halls. And the RCMP did nothing to them, while our floors rotted, our pipes burst.

It rained a lot that winter, and the notices got all wet. You could see one near our place, soggy and torn. I'd walk past it every day.

They were quieter years. No more plays, no more sports days, but we were busy working down at Boeing, or shipyards. I worked in the cannery for a bit, but mostly got by sewing. You'd walk down the street, and it'd be full of women in groups, wearing stained coveralls, stinking of herring or grease, and all talking and laughing. They couldn't blacklist the reds anymore either, so all the union men got jobs everywhere they looked, all the factory doors opened again.

And finally, after all the pressure, they reopened Clinton Hall. It was a mess. The walls greasy, dirt and droppings on the floor. I went in with a dozen women, and we scrubbed it from top to bottom, and when we had our celebration, I got up on the stage and read a poem I'd written. There were hundreds there, all waiting and me on that stage I'd loved so well, and the children who were going to sing next were standing on the side pushing each other and shushing and giggling. The lights went up, and I started.



Figure 17. V-J celebrations. Jack Lindsay photograph. (Vancouver A City Album)

AUGUST 16, 2002

SHARON YANDLE:

Mother never said a bad word about Aiti, had nothing but praise and affection. She used to say Aiti had such a hard row to hoe, how generous she was, how hospitable. Sonya says Mother cried more when Aiti died than for anyone before or since: her best friend, her own parents, her brother, her husband...

We talked about her when Mother was in the hospital that last time. Mother remembered Aiti was living with a man quite a bit younger, someone with a funny name, but for the life of me, I can't remember what it was. Something like "Tommy Tune" or "Tommy Tweet." She might've been in her 40's at this time.

Before that, she lived next door to us, on Perry Street. Or close by, anyway. Father once borrowed her sewing machine and made curtains 'cause Mother didn't know how. Mother was a horrible housekeeper. She couldn't cook to save her life; and Father was an awful plumber, hated his job. They should've switched places, but that was unheard of in those days. She'd cook the vegetables till they were limp.

If he buggers off, it doesn't matter.
It doesn't matter because I'm completely independent.
I've got my dressmaking, my own living.
I've got this.

It was over coffee she said this,
she gestured to the Singer.
The coffee black in the cups.

She smiled at Elsie,
gave her another slice of cake.

When Juho died, Ida was born into the city listings, squalling and covered in blood, a *wid*. Had he stayed alive a little longer, she would have appeared in brackets beside his name, as in Strom, Juho (Ida). At the cemetery, friends and relations touched her shoulder, murmured condolences, and she looked up and smiled through her tears, and wiped the dirt off her unlined hands.

Years later, she disappeared. For two years, a smudge on the page, crossed over, crossed out – how does a woman get unborn? The moment she ran her fingers up a man's thigh, the moment she kissed his clavicle, the moment she straddled him, and watched his hands clutching her breasts. The moment she put her toothbrush into the jar – before the spit was washed away, her life swirled off the page, and she wouldn't get it back until he left, and then, watch: that word again, the hair clipped off, the mirror covered, the white voices murmuring and the dirt thrown onto Juho's coffin.



Figure 18. Ulli and Elsie. (Sylvi Santaga)

All of them had music. The skirl and polish of keys; Ulli half cocked, singing *If I Loved You* at the dance. Spirits flowing into the glass, the cold glass and him.

A cappella, tenor, treble clef, and Love-In-A-Mist. And he did this well: Winged Everlasting, Cupid's Dart, Heart's Ease – Elsie ditched her date. Later, their youngest, Sharon Rose.

Ida went to Montana with the choir, and Voitto played his horn on the beach, this time for Matilda.

And crabs scuttled under rocks. Elsie watched the room darken and his hands stretched out upon the keys. And in Montana, Ida threw back her head and gave the lilt of her voice to the hills.

MAY 22ND, 2002

SHARON YANDLE:

Father was a "Saturday Night Soldier." Before the war he was in the reserve army. Mother used to talk about how she was going out with Father at the same time she was going out with Boring Old Bert. She was on a streetcar, and Father got on - so dashing in his uniform - and there she was, sitting with Boring Old Bert. She used to get letters from Bert in the 30's that'd say stuff like, "Looks like snow tonight," and the ones from Father would describe the stars and the night and how she was all he could think of....

Christ, it was awful. So many brawls in the house, so many drunks, I couldn't do my homework. The house was freezing. Father jacked up the house onto stilts to work on it, but never jacked it down again, and Mother used to have to break the ice under the bed with a hammer. I'd wake up to the sound of ice breaking.

THEFT, 1946

The whirling room and her hair weighed down with grease. She brought water to the bedside, and now she runs it against her lips and yellow tongue, before letting it dribble out the sides of her mouth. She spits into her handkerchief. She smells.

The room shifts; they enter. Not on tiptoe - Jack's a heavy man, couldn't tiptoe if he tried. Lal you can hear a mile off with his tuneless whistling. The in and out of his breath. *There it is.*

She can't stop them. Tries. Raises herself up on one elbow and speaks in a crackling, dead leaves voice. Feet clomp off. Lal's fool giggle down the hall.

They go to the Dodson. Their tongues lick foam off Hastings Street.

You will learn about heartbreak, now that you have a child, my mother told my brother. She had thought this earlier, driving home, the windshield wipers chasing each other in that endless game of tag. Almost got you, almost got you back.

*

The rain falls on the truck as it clatters past. The curtain flicks. Ulli's youngest stands behind, watching.

As is Ida, from the street, or somewhere further, somewhere in her house in Burnaby now. The way she moves so quick, it's hard to keep track, but still, run your finger down the list and you'll see her in this house, this house she'll only stay in for a year, before crossing Boundary again. The knickknacks in that tiny room, and the walls shaking as her son drives down a quiet street, passing trees: hemlock, elm.

The little girl turns and tells her mother, and they put on their coats and gloves. The dull black boots that pinch her toes.

She'll move again, and again, now disappearing for two years, now present in the city when she lived out on the farm in Wellington, washing floors, but still wherever she is, her sons pop in, they ask for money, or steal it, they live with her, or at least the ones without wives, the ones that come crawling to her after a bender. When Jack is 40, he moves back home, slings his rough coat over the chair.

They go on the streetcar, down to the bar, that seedy watering hole, that beer parlour, a parlour, that's a joke, those stained yellow walls, and the men with the cork boots thumping on stools. No place for a child, and not allowed anyway, so she's off to the corner store, to open the door for pennies, while Elsie pleads, before it all goes down his gullet, or the guts of his friends, swimming in livers yellow like the walls.

The pictures shake. And what she knows, she'd give anything not to know, not to see that look in Elsie's eyes, not to smell Jack's puke, not to watch even her sweet Lal, giggling and shoving his whiskered face against his nieces' cheeks; it's not enough that Auli is the golden child, it's not enough to have just one out of four, it's not...

And my mother opens the door and closes it, opens it and closes it, opens it and closes it, opens it and



Figure 19. Ida and family, from left to right: Jack, Lal, Ulli, Ida, Auli. (Sylvi Santaga)

This Time of Day

ON NAMES

Voitto was a Voitte was a Voitt. He lost an E in the caption under the photograph, gained an O in the Death Registration Index. Juho married Ida and seven years later, turned into Juko, Event: death. My aunt's middle name was supposed to be Sylvi, but the authorities decided it was a mistake, and she became Sylvia instead. When my grandmother met my grandfather, he was Voitto Uljas. Everyone knew him as Ulli. She said *that's a stupid name* and then he was known as Vic. I'm named Victoria, after him.

V. PEIPPO

1879 - 1954

That first morning, we walked to the cemetery. Grass had grown into his name, and I knelt above his bones with a nail file, cleaned as much as I could, while my mother and aunts talked and laughed around me. It was a sunny day with no shadows, the ocean to our left behind the trees, the cars rattling around the corner.

After dinner that evening, I picked a handful of broom and walked back, stuck the branches on the back and sides of the grave, a scatter of blossoms at the front. Against those silk and hothouse carnations, the yellow flowers shone. I had picked broom because it was all I saw, but I loved it, too – the wildness of it, its tenacious grip on the earth. Perhaps he preferred it as well, this reminder of a world he knew.

Earlier that day, I met a man who used to steal turnips out of Voitto's garden. Later, I learnt that shortly before he died of throat cancer, Voitto bought ten acres of land in Maple Ridge for his granddaughters. My mother's portion went to buy property on this island where I am now, my back against a log, staring at the waves.

Suddenly, he is kind, a man defenseless, a man in his garden. He turns his head to call to Matilda. She sits on the porch, knitting sweaters for his ragamuffin grandchildren she's never met. He turns to ask her something, the mist stretching out on the mountains above Port McNeill, and his enormous turnips gone.

*

It is a Finnish tradition for the children to dig their parents' graves. When Voitto died, Jack and Ulli came up to bury him. They'd been drinking, and by the time they got to Sointula, the funeral was over. We never did know who dug his grave. Perhaps it was Onni, Matilda's son.

It was the first time I had ever visited the grave of a relative, my arms full of broom. I talked to him, apologized – *I'm sorry if I got you wrong*. So much goodness mixed up with cruelty, a man who shuts his child up in a closet for days, saliva gathering in his mouth. He horks it out at Lal's name. Then, land, sweaters, my aunt remembers blue blazers and shoes, a boy recalls him leaping from rafter to rafter in the net loft. He was terrified the old man would fall, but he didn't, he didn't...

Every time I say something new, I write it down in my notebook, I think, *I could use that*. I can see this apology with line breaks, it's not all I see, but it's there.

And when I came back the next day, the broom had wilted, fallen out of the earth.

This time of day, the light through the French windows, patches on the kitchen wall. Musicians in Birdland raise their saxophones in a toast. Look at the buds on the tree. Look at your photograph on the wall, the reflection of your face on your face and the light that starts to dim.

It is gray on the coast, a leaf with a pool of rain. We could go there instead, take the boat and sing Beatles songs with our hair whipping into our faces, and you with that grin I only saw in a few photographs. We could walk on the beach with my mother, gather seaweed for her garden. Before dinner, a Scrabble game and my mother knitting. The radio on, and you with your legs tucked under, your hands around a mug of tea.

Sylvi was home with her tonsils out when Ida died.
The phone rang and she heard her mother crying.
What's wrong, she tried to call out,

and Auli came in and told her.
Don't cry, don't cry, Auli begged.
She was afraid the tears would rip out the stitches.

William, South Africa; 3 sisters in England. Funeral Saturday, January 31, at 10 a.m. from the Heather Chapel of Harold Edwards' Ltd., 755 W. Broadway. Interment, Ocean View.

MATHIESSEN—Passed away January 28, 1953, Ralph Elmer Mathiesen of 582 River Rd., R.R.1, Vancouver, B.C., in his 48th year. Survived by his loving wife; 2 sons, David and Grant at home; his father, Mr. H. Mathiesen, Vancouver. Funeral service SAT., at 10 a.m. to Simonson & McBride Funeral Chapel, Broadway, at Maple St., Rev. J. H. Attridge officiating. Interment, Mountain View Cemetery.

MILLS—On Jan. 27, 1953, Clara Mills, 3228 E. 21st Ave., aged 54 years. Survived by his loving wife, Mary A.; 2 sons in the R.C.N., G. A. (Art) in Korea, and Jas. E. Halifax; 1 daughter, Mrs. C. J. Miller, Nova Scotia; 3 grandchildren; 2 brothers, Ralph W. Vancouver; Evan L. California; 2 sisters, Mrs. U. Anderson, Port Coquitlam; and Miss A. Carmichael, Vancouver. Funeral service in the Mount Pleasant Chapel, Kingsway at 11th Ave., Saturday, Jan. 31, at 10 a.m. Interment, Ocean View. Burial Park, Rev. J. E. Whittier officiating. Deceased was in 102 Battalion in First World War.

SAWLE—On Jan. 28, 1953, in the Royal Columbian Hospital, Anne Jean, wife of Charles H. Sawle, 923 Fourth St., New Westminster, in her 60th year. Also survived by her foster daughter, Mrs. Jean Simolini, New Westminster; also several nieces and nephews. Funeral service Saturday, Jan. 31, at 1:30 p.m. in the Funeral Home of S. Sewell & Sons, Rev. W. B. William, D.D. officiating. Cremation. No flowers by request.

SHAW—Passed away January 28, 1953, in hospital, Mrs. Anne Shaw of 718 Jervis St., in her 72nd year. Survived by a nephew in California. Funeral service Saturday, Jan. 31, at 10 a.m. in the Georgia Chapel of Center and Hanna, 1049 W. Georgia St., the Rev. G. F. Johnson officiating. Interment, Ocean View Burial Park.

SPARKS—At his residence, 118 North Boundary Road, Jan. 28, 1953, Bernard Sparks, aged 58 years, co-owner of the Eastern Bakery and a resident of Burnaby for 30 years. Survived by 2 brothers, Robert and Jack, Vancouver; 1 sister, Mrs. L. F. Scott, Seattle, B.C.; nephews and nieces. Funeral service in the Burnaby Funeral Directors' Chapel, 4298 E. Hastings St., (Rev. N. D. McIntosh officiating. Cremation.

SIMS—Passed away Thursday, Jan. 28, 1953, Agnes Sims of Trans-Canada Highway, Aldergrove. She is survived by her husband, Frederick, at home; son, Gordon; 3 children; 3 sisters in England; 1 brother, William Edmonds, Regina; 2 grandchildren. Funeral service Monday, Feb. 2, at 1 p.m. in the chapel of the Langley Funeral Home, Rev. T. E. Harris officiating. Interment in Aberdeen Cemetery. Langley Funeral Home in charge.

STROM—On January 27, 1953, at General Hospital, Ida Basilia Strom, in her 70th year, late residence 213 East Hastings St. Survived by 3 sons and 1 daughter. Remains resting at the Bell Funeral Home, 2748 East Hastings St. Funeral announcements later.

WILKINSON—On Jan. 28, 1953, in the Royal Columbian Hospital, Edward Wilkison, 1501 Beatty Rd., Whalley, aged 77 years. Survived by his wife; 2 sons, Gordon, Seattle, Leonard, Surrey; 3 daughters, Mrs. W. Miller, Mrs. A. McQuinn, Seattle; Mrs. C. Miller, Vancouver; Mrs. K. North, Mrs. H. Schultz, Mrs. R. Roberts, Vancouver; Mrs. T. MacDonald, Vancouver.

Funeral service Saturday, Jan. 31, 1:30 p.m. in the Zion Lutheran Church, Cloverdale, Rev. Charles officiating. Interment, Surrey Center Cemetery, S. Sewell & Sons.

Many have received in answer to Mr. J. E. Raymond and family.

We wish to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to our many friends, neighbors and relatives who were so kind to us during our recent bereavement, also for the beautiful floral and spiritual offerings. Special thanks to the Staff of St. Joseph's Hospital, Sisters of the Chinese Catholic Mission and Father Leonard.

—George, Harry, Charles, James, Yuen and families.

We are deeply grateful to our relatives, neighbors and friends for the kindness and sympathy shown in our bereavement, the death of a dear wife and daughter-in-law. Special thanks to Rev. C. W. Bryce and all those who sent the beautiful floral tributes.

—John Smith, Jr.

—Mr. and Mrs. John Smith, Sr., and family.

I wish to extend thanks and appreciation for the many kindnesses, messages of love and understanding and beautiful floral offerings from many friends and neighbors during the illness and death of my beloved wife. I especially wish to thank Rev. E. Pitt-Griffiths, Dr. Sagar and Dr. J. Wilson.

—Mr. R. Morgan.

I wish to extend sincere thanks and appreciation for many kindnesses, messages of love and understanding and beautiful floral offerings from our many relatives, friends and fellow workers, tendered during the illness and death of my dear brother, Larry Brydon.

9 IN MEMORIAM

BENNETT—In loving memory of our dearly loved and only son, Flying Officer Cecil J. Bennett, R.C.A.F., missing after air operations over Germany, Jan. 30, 1943.

Loving memories never die
As the years go on, and days
Go by
In our hearts he's still living yet—
We loved him too dearly to ever forget.

Mother and Dad.

RODGER—In affectionate remembrance of my dear husband, Alex, who passed away Jan. 30, 1953. As I loved you so I miss you, in my memory you are near. Loved, remembered, longed for always.

Bringing many a silent tear,
'Tis sweet to know we'll meet again
Where partings are no more.
And that the one I loved so well
Has only gone before.
His loving wife, Isabel.

BENNETT—In memory of my dearest friend, P/O Cecil Joseph Bennett, R.C.A.F., missing after air raid over Germany, Jan. 30, 1943.

Silent memories true and tender,
Just to show we still remember.

—Ever remembered, Brian.

JOYCE—In loving memory of Robert Howard Joyce, who passed away Jan. 28, 1953.

Gone from us but leaving memories.
Death can never take away
Memories that will always linger,
While upon this earth we stay.

—Ever remembered by his loving wife and children, Beverly, Judy and Bobby.

SHARP—In memory of a dear husband and father, Charlie, who passed away Jan. 30, 1951.

And while you rest in peaceful sleep

—Your memory, Dad, we'll always keep.

His loving wife and family.

WELSH—In loving memory of Jack Welsh, our husband and daddy, who died Jan. 30, 1952. As we loved you, so we miss you. In our memory you are near.

—Ever remembered by his loving wife and children.

Bringing many a silent tear,
Sadly missed by his wife, Peggy, and children, Michael, Margaret and John.

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West Vancouver West 154

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16 INFORMATION WTD!
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strom, Box 1864 Enderby, B.C. Last
known address was Northern Peak
Fields, Eburne, B.C.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts
of George Allan Mann, formerly of
Nelson, Williams Lake and Van-
couver, B.C., please contact Box
679 Province. Matter of urgent per-
sonal concern.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts
of James Ferguson, formerly of
Winnipeg, B.C., please contact Box 661
Province. Matter of urgent personal
concern.

Will John Gelger, formerly of
Vernon, B.C., or anyone knowing his
whereabouts, please write to Box
583 Province.

Will Mrs. Mildred Blunt or any-
one knowing her, please write to
Box 661 Province.

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Figure 20. Classified. (VPL)

I was going to bring you flowers. But everything was sleek and purebred, smug irises and tiger lilies. I didn't want to leave anything that could die.

I went to Ocean View. There's no view, only a scatter of trees. Near your grave, a laurel tree, wind blowing through its leaves. A busy intersection, a chain-link fence, your unmarked grave. It seemed wrong. I took out my notebook and started to write your name. I thought I'd stick the paper in the ground.

Maybe this wasn't your choice, maybe your children were too poor to pay for a headstone. But I prefer to think you didn't want to be known. Wasn't it always that way? In the city archives, I found only that you owned a house made of wood. Your life couldn't be dissected, filed. I walked away, smiling.

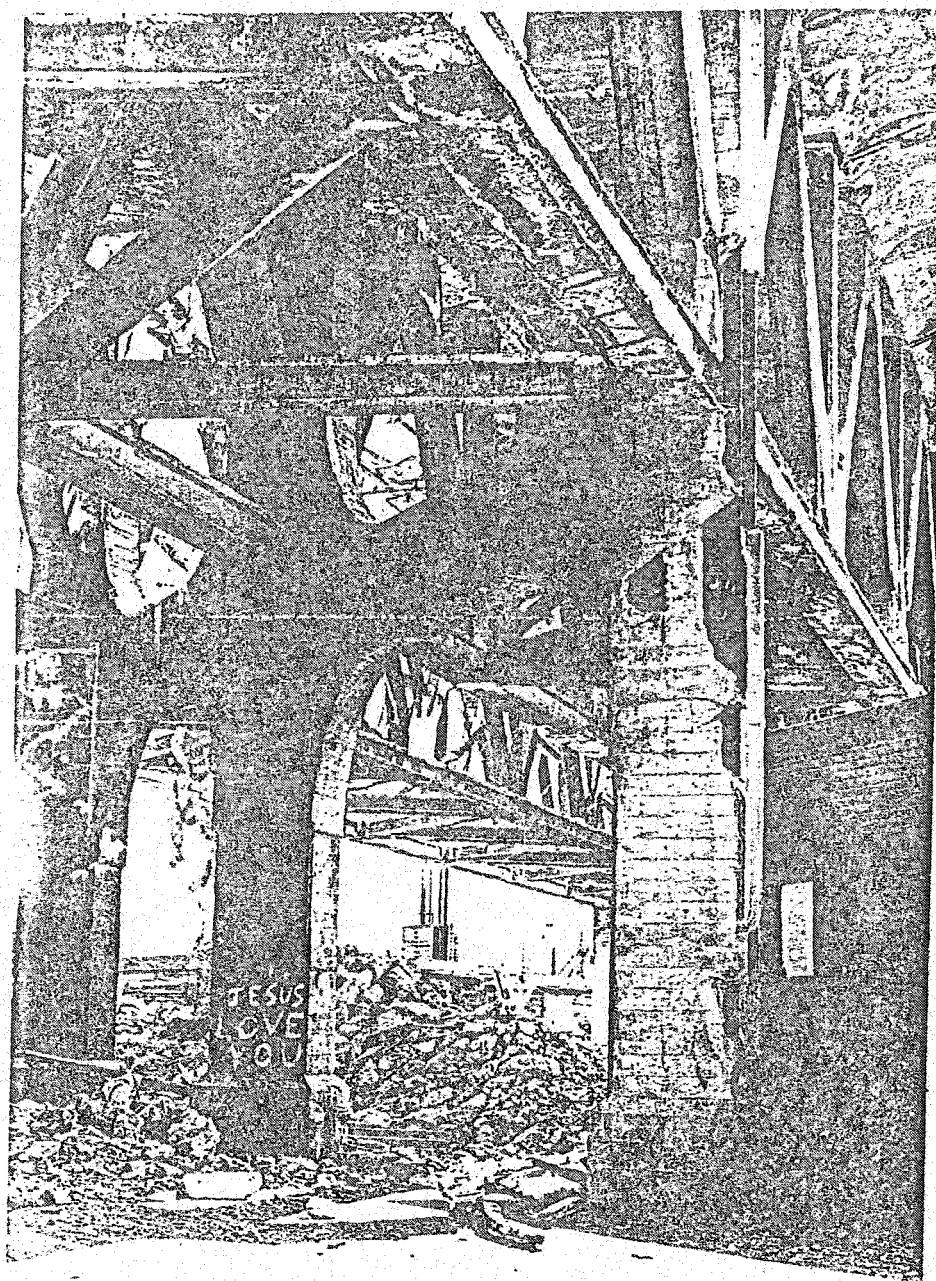
There was nothing I wanted to write down, nothing I wanted to say. I gave you a stone and watched it for awhile. The wind in the tree, and the stone in the grass. Someone walking by wouldn't even notice.

There are rats under the viaduct. Rats in the rundown rooming houses, rats scuttling across the floor of the Alberta Wheat Pool, rats in the dust. Rats by the blackberry bushes on Wall, rats on doorsteps, rats in the waste reduction plant: glistening, greedy bodies, thick curved tails.

There are rats under the viaduct, big as a hand. And the men who live there feel them running over their chests as they sleep, and their dreaming is full of rats.

The man with the shaking hands has made friends with the rats. He gives them food, and sometimes drink, watches the way the light from the fire flickers on their fur. Grins at their staggering bodies, the way they move and move in circles before falling into the dirt. Sometimes when he's watching their gleaming fur, he thinks of his mother's banisters in their first real house, the way they sparkled and shone, the way his face looked in the reflection.

It's February, bitter cold. His nieces huddle together in the bed and listen to the beatings and yells, and the chink chink chink of the ice breaking. Sometimes they can see the fires under the viaduct burning. The smoke rises and Uncle Lal looks up from his rats and smiles.



20.7.71

A-3.1

Figure 21. Georgia Street Viaduct (City of Vancouver Archives)

I found her on the computer, all white noise buzzing – who'd have thought that place a life? She was a Hannus. No finch or river, no occupation like *Smith, Baker, Farmer*. Just a derivative of Johannes. Perhaps way back someone's first name was John.

Until September, all we'd known was *Ida*.

And then a dark screen humming. And she was a Hannus. The song, the psalm of it.

I will give birth to you. I will name you Hannah. I will have you here, in my arms. Against these breasts, your head, the brown hair. Your great-great grandmother came to this city. Passed through on a train, the night saying nothing. Pressed her face against the glass –



Figure 22. Ida Basilia Hannus (1882-1953).

Author's Note

The commune Sointula, founded by Matti Kurikka (idealistic theosophist) and Austin Mäkelä (practical Marxist), failed, though vestiges of it remain: old women on the street speaking Finnish, the longest running Co-op store in Canada, the grave of my great-grandfather, salal berries.

Ida and Voitto, having met somewhere, lived together, in Sointula, Vancouver, and Webster's Corners. After a while, they stopped. Blanks in the city directories, years lost.

At my aunt's, a brown notebook is passed around: Ida's journal/musings/poems/songs. There are times when the handwriting changes. I'd like to say this journal is Ida.

A woman walks into a square, sees a bunch of women marching and holding signs. She takes a sign and raises it high, hoping the words correspond with her beliefs. On November 11, 1906, she notes:

We should not allow the women of the future to wallow in the same narrow space. We must educate our growing girls to understand that they must act in society like men do. Let us start so that the children who surround us will continue our work with better results when they grow up.

Six jars of crabapple jelly setting on the table. Wax cooling in an empty room.

My thanks to Ida. And my love.

Sources

People:

Oana Avasilichioaei, Brenda Felker, Varpu Lindström, Sonya MacKinnon, Val Patenaude (curator of the Maple Ridge Museum), Sylvi Santaga, May St. Jean, and Sharon Yandle.

Books:

Pat Barker's *Regeneration* (New York: Plume, 1991); Keith Bosley's translation of *The Kalevala* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); David Breen and Kenneth Coates' *The Pacific National Exhibition: An Illustrated History* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1982); Geoff Dyer's *The Missing of the Somme* (London: Phoenix Press, 2001); Gordon Fish, ed., *Dreams of Freedom* Sound Heritage Series Number 36 (Victoria: Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1982); Anne Kloppenborg, Alice Niwinski, Eve Johnson, eds., *Vancouver: A City Album* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1991); Michael Kluckner's *Vancouver: The Way It Was* (Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 1984); Rolf Knight's *Along the No. 20 Line: Reminiscences of the Vancouver Waterfront* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1980); Matti Kuusi, Keith Bosley, Michael Branch, eds., *Finnish Folk Poetry Epic: An Anthology in Finnish and English* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 1977); Varpu Lindström's *Defiant Sisters: A Social History of Finnish Immigrant Women in Canada* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1988); Varpu Lindström's *From Heroes to Enemies: Finns in Canada, 1937-1947* (Beaverton: Aspasia Books, 2000); Daphne Marlatt and Carole Itter, eds., *Opening Doors: Vancouver's East End* Sound Heritage Volume VIII, Nos. 1 & 2 (Victoria: Aural History Program, 1979); Eileen Pettigrew's *The Silent Enemy: Canada and the Deadly Flu of 1918* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1983); Ethel Johnston Phelps' *The Maid of the North: Feminist Folk Tales From Around the World* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1981); Patricia Wejr and Howie Smith, eds., *Fighting for Labour: Four Decades of Work in British Columbia 1910-1950* Sound Heritage Volume VII, Number 4 (Victoria: Aural History Program, 1978); Paula Wild's *Sointula: Island Utopia* (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 1995).

Articles:

"Ellis Island History Passage Across the Atlantic" www.ellisland.com/passage.html;
 "Ellis Island History The Inspection Process" www.ellisland.com/indexHistory.html;
 "Finnish Civil War 1918" www.onwar.com/aced/data/foxtrot/finncivwar1918.htm; Matti Halminen's "Sointula: The History of the Kalevan Kansa and Finnish Canadians – 1936" Appendix I. in Allan Henry Salo's *The Kalevan Kansa Colonization Company, Limited: A Finnish-Canadian Millenarian Movement in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1978) 231-399; John Ilmari Kolehmainen's "Harmony Island: A Finnish Utopian Venture in British Columbia" www.genealogia.fi/emi/art/article90e (originally published in *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, Volume V, No. 2, 1941);

June Pelo's "Food Traditions" <http://www.genealogia.fi/emi/art/article107e.htm>;
 Elizabeth Tolbert's "The voice of lament: female vocality and performative efficacy in the Finnish-Karelian *itkuvirsi*" in Leslie C. Dunn and Nancy A. Jones' *Embodied voices: representing female vocality in Western culture* (Cambridge University Press, 1996) 179-194; J. Donald Wilson's "'Never Believe What You Have Never Doubted': Matti Kurikka's Dream for a New World Utopia" in *Finnish Diaspora I: Canada, South America, Africa, Australia and Sweden*, ed. Michael G. Karni (Toronto: The Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1981) 131-153.

Miscellaneous:

Ida Basilia Hannus' manifest record (www.ellisland.com), family death and marriage certificates (B.C. Provincial Archives), Henderson's City of Vancouver Directory and Henderson's Directory of British Columbia (City of Vancouver Archives, Maple Ridge Museum, Vancouver Public Library).

List of plays performed by the Finnish Organization of Canada, in the *Finnish Organization of Canada Play and Music Collection*, National Archives of Canada.

Varpu Lindström's lecture "Women of Sointula: 1901 – 1914" given at Sointula, May 21st, 2000.

Quotes:

Epigraph and all other handwritten excerpts are taken from Ida's own journal – loosely translated by Varpu Lindström, slightly modified by me, and transcribed by Oana Avasilichioaei.

"Some lost their eyes": italicized quote from Wild, 81.

Utterly Strange Doors:

Opening quote from book 7 of *The Kalevala*, 75.

"Come here, you proper sons and daughters": Matti Kurikka's August 23rd, 1901 editorial in the newspaper *Aika*, quoted in Wild, 41.

"Let avoid romanticism": detail about lice from Sophia Kreitzberg, a Russian Jew who emigrated in 1908: "the atmosphere was so thick and dense with smoke and bodily odors that your head itched, and when you went to scratch your head . . . you got lice in your hands." (www.ellisland.com/passage.html).

"Your riches are corrupted": a translation of this biblical quote was used in Ellis Island for literacy tests c. 1917. Manifest page and line numbers were indeed pinned to people's clothing (but not, as far as I know, the contract ticket number). Verses 2 and 4 borrow

heavily on the wording of “Ellis Island History The Inspection Process,” and the wording of verse 5 (as well as the numbers of line 1) comes from Ida’s own manifest record. The last line is best explained through the following quote:

The disease which resulted in the most exclusions, however, was trachoma, a highly contagious eye infection that could cause blindness and death...Physicians checked for trachoma by turning the eyelid inside out with their fingers, a hair-pin, or a button-hook to look for inflammations on the inner eyelid-a short but extremely painful experience. The "buttonhook men" were the most dreaded officials on Ellis Island. (www.ellisland.com/indexHistory.html).

Place of Harmony:

“Place of Harmony” is a direct translation of “Sointula.”

“We have passed the steepest precipice”: Matti Kurikka, c. December, 1901, in *Aika*, quoted in Wild, 43.

Homecoming: quote in italics by Vic Adams, who taught at the Sointula school from 1937-1941 and was the nephew to Barney Johnson. The note was typewritten, except for the last sentence about V. Peippo, which was handwritten, perhaps by someone else. It was tacked to the wall of a community hall in Sointula; I was unable to find anyone who knew more about it. The coastal steamship Adams refers to was probably the Kapilano, which brought settlers to Sointula c. spring 1902.

Women and Children of Sointula, circa 1902: title from photograph caption in *Dreams of Freedom*, 34. Quote in italics from Halminen, 312.

“Voitto made music”: with the exception of the switch from “Väinämöinen” to “Voitto,” this poem is from “The Kantele I” - the manuscript of an unknown collector by K. Ganander, c. 1760, in *Finnish Folk Poetry Epic*, 168-169.

The Last Year Has Been the Most Difficult in our History: title and text are selections from Austin Mäkelä’s report to the Kalevan Kansa Colonization Company, Feb 15, 1904, quoted in Kolehmainen. I have moved the sequence of the sentences around, but have not changed any of the words.

“Under an iron bedstead”: quoted in *The Province*, Monday, Feb 2, 1903 (VPL).

Kurikka’s Defence: from his article in *Aika*, Nov 1 1903. Quoted in Halminen, 341.

Grocery Shopping: first verse from “The Kantele I” - in *Finnish Folk Poetry Epic*, 168.

The Main Reason for this Split is Female Emancipation: title and text from Matti Kurikka; title and italicized sections quoted in Wilson, 143; the rest quoted in Lindström’s lecture.

Sampo I: from *Finnish Folk Poetry Epic* and *The Kalevala*. “gap-toothed crone,” first italicized quote, “evil realm”: from *Finnish Poetry*, “The Sampo I,” 111, 112, 117. “her darling,” “come for [her] other girl,” second and third italicized quotes, “dump[s] her in [the] sleigh,” “mew[ing] at [the] tips,” “ploughing and sowing, every kind of growth, harvests, coin,” “turn[s], thicken[s] into barley beer, loaves of rye,” and last italicized quote from *The Kalevala*, books 38 and 43, pgs. 505, 506, 507, 508, 513, 570, 572, 573.

Sampo II: italicized quotes in first verse from Phelps, 3-4. “man-eating country, country that drowns heroes” (original reads “village”), “his hand...” – from *Finnish Folk Poetry Epic*, “Sampo I,” 114-115. “The book” refers to Wild’s, 99. Italicized quote at end from an e-mail to me by May St. Jean. The original e-mail read “the Peippos” instead of “Ida and Voitto”; the rest is word for word.

Peippo:

“Yesterday, I heard a bird” quoted in Phelps, 5.

“In 1902, Ida left Ellis Island”: first verse incorporates language from Ida’s ship manifest, found on the ellis island website.

“The white curtain”: *itkuliina* is the name of the special lament cloth Finnish-Karelian women lamenters wear over their face. From Tolbert, 182.

Strom:

“In 1904”: first italicized quote by Kurikka, in Wilson, 146; second italicized quote from Lindstrom’s lecture.

“Through the bones”: italicized quote from “The Creation III” in *Finnish Folk Poetry Epic*, 87.

The Dirty Thirties:

Caption under Figure 12 taken directly from City of Vancouver Archives caption.

“Ulli crouched”: italicized quote from civilian letter to R.J. Mannion, Minister of Railways and Canals in Lindström’s *From Heroes to Enemies*, 11.

“She has baked the thick loaves”: first verse from Book 25 of *The Kalevala*, 351; verse 2 from Book 21, 276; verse 3 from Book 21, 274, with the substitution of the word “this” for “the.”

“Auli fell off the porch”: “bleached in the spring sun” from Book 25 of *The Kalevala*, 345. “like water tossed on hot stones” and horse simile : from Book 50 of *The Kalevala*,

658. The original line reads: “and what the horse breathes/is like steam being stirred up/like water tossed on hot stones.”

We Came...

Haalin Kommuna: title and first half of poem from list of plays performed by the Finnish Organization of Canada. *Finnish Organization of Canada Play and Music Collection* (National Archives of Canada.).

The Winter War: italicized quote from a private letter of A. Hupponen, chair of the Finnish Civil War Veterans in Montreal, quoted in Lindstrom’s *From Heroes to Enemies*, 67.

The Traitors: while I’ve changed the tense here, and a few words (eg: substituting “my” window for “the”) these are actual quotes. The first sentence is from Bertha Söderholm; the second, Hilja Junnila. Both are quoted in Lindström’s *From Heroes to Enemies*, 127-8.

Lawful Seizure: title from a notice posted on one left-wing meeting hall: “This building is under lawful seizure by the Dominion Government of Canada.” The first four lines are taken, almost word for word from Bertha Söderholm’s account, quoted in Lindström’s *From Heroes to Enemies*, 126.

...To a Great War

“Here’s a war story”: first stanza from a letter by Muriel Fujiwara Kitagawa, quoted in Breen, 72.